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Hotel Sapphire, Colombo, after the bomb blast

★ **Bomb Explosions Rock Colombo**

★ **UNP's Stunning Defeat – Causes**

★ **Doubts Over President Wijetunge's Leadership**

★ **Abuse of Presidential Power to Pardon**

★ **Speaker Mohamed's Cancelled Jaffna Visit**

★ **The Arms Buildup for War Effort**

★ **Sub-Continental Scene**

★ **India's Stake in Sri Lanka**

★ **Book Review**

Mrs. Chandrika Kamaranatunga, Chief Minister, Western Provincial Council

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'I do not agree with a word of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it.'
– Voltaire.

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THE ALLIANCE VICTORY

Giving Sri Lanka an image of a one party state, and having held power for the last 18 years, the United National Party seemed almost invincible. However, the outcome of the recently held election for the Southern Provincial Council represents a crushing defeat for the ruling United National Party.

The much publicised defection of Anura Bandaranaike from the SLFP to the UNP, and the return of Gamini Dissanayake and former Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel to the UNP fold did not prevent the UNP's disaster in the southern elections.

This time round, the UNP had no J.R. Jayewardene or R. Premadasa, the two architects of the UNP's resurgence who turned it into a formidable political machine. By comparison, the UNP's present leader, President Wijetunga, is a pygmy in every sense. He is no public speaker, organiser or strategist. He was appointed Prime Minister by late President Premadasa primarily because of his sheer lack of leadership qualities, and to keep at bay the then aspirants for the UNP's leadership, Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake. At best, Mr. Wijetunga is a lack-lustre politician of a provincial type. However, he was at the right place to become President when President Premadasa was assassinated last May.

Following its electoral debacle in the southern province, the UNP is in complete disarray. The simmering internal dissensions have come out into the open raising doubts over Wijetunga's continued leadership of the UNP. Certain sections of the party have come out accusing him of what they describe as Wijetunga's betrayal of the Premadasa legacy, his unconcealed efforts to tarnish his predecessor's image, and to ignore, sideline and sometimes insult the family members and political friends of the late President. Reacting to these accusations, of late, Mr. Wijetunga has given indications of re-embracing his predecessor's legacy without much evident conviction.

Despite the fact that Premadasa did very little in practical terms to resolve the ethnic conflict, at least he did profess publicly his belief in a multi-ethnic society, and did say and do many things to assuage the sensibilities of the minority Tamils and Muslims. However, within months of assuming office, Wijetunga did not hesitate to display his provincialism, his narrow and sectarian approach on issues that concerned the national minorities.

The alliance between the UNP and the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) led by Thondaman had been key to the success of the UNP under J.R. Jayewardene and R. Premadasa. Wijetunga's attitude to and speeches on issues relating to the minorities reflecting a strident Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist stance, and his foray into the internal organisational disputes within the CWC taking sides against Mr. Thondaman, have gravely strained this alliance so much so that Mr. Thondaman has openly stated his readiness to align with the opposition.

Wijetunga's denial of the existence of an ethnic problem in the island, and his posturing on prosecuting and winning the war in the Northeast have been decisively rejected by the southern electorate. The people have denied him the 'strong hand and mandate' he asked for. On the other hand, leading the opposition Peoples Alliance, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaranatunga campaigned on a positive platform for peace, an end to the war and a negotiated political solution to the present conflict, and received the overwhelming backing from the people.

The Peoples Alliance victory in the south is as remarkable as it is timely in what is regarded as an election year. The opposition, which seemed paralysed and ineffective all these years, looks as if it is on a comeback trail to power, signalling an end to the UNP's unbroken rule for eighteen years.

NEWS REVIEW

★ BOMB BLASTS ROCK COLOMBO HOTELS

In what was described as a co-ordinated attack, Colombo was rocked by bombs which exploded almost simultaneously in four different hotels on 8 April. Yet another bomb exploded in the Dehiwela Zoo around 9.30 am the following morning. Though no one claimed responsibility, official spokesmen were quick to claim that the explosions were the handiwork of the Tamil Tigers, the aim of which was to disrupt the island's tourist industry and create panic among all communities. The security forces clamped down tight security in and around the capital following the explosions.

Two of the explosions, which occurred between 10 and 10.45 pm, were at two of the capital's five-star hotels, Taj Samudra and Colombo Marriot. The bombs had been planted in the toilets of these hotels and though the explosions caused much damage, no one was hurt. The third explosion, at about the same time, was in the bar area at the Sapphire Hotel in Wellawatte causing fairly extensive damage to the front of the building and injuring several people.

The fourth explosion occurred prematurely on the beach near the five-star Mount Lavinia Hotel was at about 8.30 pm. The bomb had presumably exploded accidentally when it was being assembled or primed. Of the two persons reported to have been in the process of assembling the bomb, one was killed instantly and the other seriously injured. The injured man reportedly ran and jumped into the sea, but was later arrested by the police and taken to the hospital and treated there under heavy security.

The bomber who was killed in the Mt. Lavinia explosion has been identified as a 22-year-old Tamil youth by the name of Mahendran Madhivannan, a ticketing assistant at a well known travel agency in Colombo. The second person who was critically injured has been identified as another Tamil youth by the name of Arunasalam who would be questioned by special investigators when he is fit. Both were residents of Ratmalana, and investigators had recovered an unexploded bomb with a timing device at Arunasalam's residence, and were following up several clues found there.

The fact that the persons involved in the Mt. Lavinia explosion were identified as Tamils was used by government spokesmen as proof of their assertion that the Tamil Tigers were responsible for all the explosions. President's Secretary, Mr. H.J. Wijayadasa said that the blasts were carried out to terrorise all sections of the community, create general panic and to damage the tourist industry. It was most ironical that the most extensive damage was caused to a hotel in the predominantly Tamil area of Wellawatte, and over 75 percent of the guests at the hotel were Tamils from Jaffna, he said.

Human rights watchers in the island fear that the reported death of one Tamil youth and another being severely injured while allegedly handling a bomb which went off accidentally might lead to intensified and indiscriminate search and arrest operations by security forces in Colombo and adjoining areas. It may be noted that the government conceded to Amnesty International that as many as 15,000 Tamils were arrested since 1993 up to the end of January this year.

★ ARMS BUILD-UP FOR WAR EFFORT

The Sri Lankan government is engaged in strengthening its armed forces and their military capability both in terms of manpower and hardware. Only recently, the army engaged in a recruitment drive to increase its one hundred thousand force by an additional ten thousand.

In the meantime, large scale purchases of military hardware are also being undertaken. A delegation of senior defence officials left, Moscow bound on 10 April for talks to purchase over one hundred Russian Army BMP tracked infantry fighting vehicles for the Sri Lankan Army's proposed new mechanised infantry brigade, according to informed sources in Colombo.

The Machines are being offered by the Russian firm Voentech, a private company, which deals in second-hand ex-Soviet equipment. The Army reportedly wants to acquire the 100 Russian BMP IFVs and 200 Buffel Troop Carriers from South Africa for the newly proposed mechanised infantry brigade. Evaluation is also being undertaken to purchase more British-built armoured vehicles.

Currently the army's tracked armour consists of T-55 battle tanks and Chinese-built T-85 infantry fighting vehicles. During last year's November Tiger assault on Pooneryn Army camp, the Army lost one of its T-55 battle tanks to the Tigers.

The Army has considered plans to set up a mechanised brigade and an air assault brigade under a wide-ranging reorganisation effort to improve troop mobility and allow for rapid reaction in crisis situations.

The Moscow bound team headed by Defence Ministry Secretary and former Army Commander General Hamilton Wanasinghe is expected to hold talks with Lt. General Anatoly G. Fountikov representing Voentech. It is learnt that contacts have been continuing between the two parties since they met at the Singapore Air Show in February.

Sri Lanka military delegations have also recently visited China and South Africa in connection with weapons purchases. At the beginning of April, Sri Lankan delegation headed by the Navy Commander, Vice Admiral Mohan Samarasekera signed Rs.1.15 billion deal with China to buy for the Navy a warship, two gunboats and a landing craft. The agreement is for a 60 metre 'Hinan' Class Submarine-Chaser type gunboat, two fast gunboats and a 250 ton landing craft. The sub-chaser will become the Navy's new flagship.

A recent proposal to allow the Chinese armaments firm Norinco (North Industries Corporation) to set a bonded warehouse of arms in Sri Lanka to supply the needs of security forces has run into controversy because of the fear that Norinco would gain a virtual monopoly in supplying weapons to the forces.

The contract with Norinco is for five years and it apparently allows for prices to be reviewed annually. It is said that Norinco meets 60 percent of the island's military needs. Fears have been expressed that if Norinco was allowed to set up the bonded store as proposed in Sri Lanka, the chances of satisfying the requirements whenever they arise from other cheaper sources would not be there.

★ PEOPLES ALLIANCE VICTORY – A TRIUMPH FOR CHANDRIKA

The SLFP-led Peoples Alliance (PA) convincingly won the Southern Provincial Council elections held on 23 March polling 54.52 percent of the votes cast and taking 32 seats in the 55 Member Council. The UNP obtained 43.91 percent of the votes cast and 23 of the seats.

An analysis of the votes shows that the PA improved its performance in the entire province winning by large margins in 20 of the 21 parliamentary electorates which fall within the province.

Compared to the last year's 17 May election which resulted in almost a neck and neck situation with the then existing combination of PA and DUNF obtaining 28 seats to the UNP'S 27

seats, this time the PA alone collected about 168,000 more votes in the province – 50,000 more votes in the Gall District, 63,000 more in the Matara District and 55,000 more in the Hambantota District.

It would seem that most of the votes cast to the Democratic United National Front (DUNF) in last year's May election went this time to PA candidates. In fact, following the disintegration of the DUNF and the defection of its leader Gamini Dissanayake and General Secretary G.M. Premachandra to the UNP, five former DUNF Councillors ran at these elections under the PA banner.

Although there were some incidents of violence in the run up to the elections, by and large, they were considered free and fair with no opportunity for large scale impersonations or other forms of malpractices. 'People's vigilance and the internal contradictions within the UNP may have influenced the government party's failure to engage in large scale electoral rigging as they used to do in the past', said Chandrika Kumaranatunga, the Chief Minister of the Western Provincial Council.

Political observers in Colombo believe that the victory of the PA at these elections and the almost crushing defeat of the ruling UNP indicated that the Opposition could stage a comeback after 17 years being out of power.

The infighting particularly within the SLFP for the last several years had virtually paralysed the Opposition. With the departure of Anura Bandaranaike to the UNP, the cause of infighting seems to have been overcome, and now it looks as if the PA was on the come back trail.

These election had given the opportunity to Chandrika to demonstrate her stature and she rose up to the occasion; now she had been lifted from regional politics to national politics in a big way; and she had emerged as a formidable national leader, was the comment made by the leader of Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, Mr. M.H.M. Ashraff.

★ UNP – CWC TROUBLES

Cabinet Minister and CWC President, Mr. Thondaman attributed the defeat of the UNP in the south to its 'communal line' which had been soundly rejected by the southern people and praised Chandrika for the manner in which she led the PA's campaign. 'It was a creditable performance on her part,' he said.

Mr. Thondaman does not conceal his displeasure with President Wijetunga who avoided asking Thondaman to participate in the UNP's campaign. However, it is reported that the UNP's General Secretary, Mr. Sirisena Cooray, had invited him to participate, but Mr. Thondaman had declined saying, 'My Minister was dismissed from the Central Provincial Council; my nominee for a portfolio was overlooked and a Member subjected by the CWC for disciplinary action was offered a portfolio. So, I am not interested in any campaign.' It is, therefore, quite apparent that it is the interference by the UNP leadership in the internal affairs of the CWC by supporting Sellasamy and 8 other CWC rebels as against Thondaman which has resulted in much friction between the parties.

The UNP leadership is aware that the defeat of the party in areas like Deniyaya, Akuressa, Bentara-Elpitya, Baddegama, Hiniduma, Karandeniya and Elpitya had been due to the non-co-operation of the CWC leader who did not advise his party members in these areas to vote for the UNP.

Despite the efforts of mediators, including by former President J.R. Jayawardene, CWC's troubles with the UNP seem to be increasing rather than decreasing.

★ CWC RIFT WIDENS

There is no sign that the rift in the Ceylon Workers Congress between its hitherto undisputed leader, Mr. Thondaman, and the rebel group led by General Secretary, S. Sellasamy, is at an end. On the contrary it seems to be escalating.

Months of efforts to settle the matter seem to have come to a dead end. In a press interview, Mr. Sellasamy says that the only way in which Mr. Thondaman wants to bring an end to the dispute is by expelling him from the post of General-Secretary and the CWC. Today, the CWC is a one-man show.

He says that while he wants to bring about an amicable settlement and maintain the status quo, Mr. Thondaman has been frustrating all efforts by him and other mediators who are themselves fed up.

Mr. Sellasamy accuses that three persons consisting of Mr. T's grandson, Mr. Arumugam, Sathasivam and Kandiah with approval of Mr. T, are conducting a vicious personal attack against him in estate areas. 'These three are misleading Mr. T and once they expel me, they want to get hold of power and run the party', he says.

Mr. Sellasamy says that he does not want the party to which he had worked throughout his life to split, and that he is still ready and willing to settle the matter with Mr. T by talking.

★ UPCOUNTRY FRONT'S LEADER TO TAKE OATHS

The leader of the Upcountry Peoples Front, Periyasamy Chandresekeran took oaths on 11 April as a Member of the Central Provincial Council.

Mr. Chandrasekeran who contested and was elected as member of the CPC in May last year while he was in prison accused of harbouring Varathan, a suspect in the bomb attack on the Army's Joint Operations Command headquarters in Colombo.

Mr. Chandrasekeran has been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for over an year and the trial against him has been continuing for the last several months. Several previous applications for his release on bail pending the trial were refused. But recently he was released on bail.

Mr. Chandrasekeran began his trade union work and political career in the Ceylon Workers Congress, and he left it a few years ago to form a much more radical political organisation, the Upcountry Peoples Front, primarily operating in the plantation areas. Political observers say that he is quite popular among the estate youth because of his radical stance on most questions, and they believe that he could be a potential threat to the leadership of Mr. Thondaman among the plantation workers.

★ LTTE BANS DOWRY SYSTEM

In marking the International Women's Day, Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran issued a decree abolishing the dowry system among Tamils. Giving of dowry in the form of jewellery, movable or immovable property and cash by parents on the occasion of or in consideration of the marriage of their daughter to a man has been an age-old custom among Sri Lankan Tamils.

The dowry system has been criticised as a reactionary practice imposing severe social disability among women, and the LTTE regards its abolition as essential in the treatment of women as equal in society. A considerable section of the Tiger cadres are women and they have been playing an increasingly important role even in battles with the security forces. The Tiger leadership used the occasion of the International Women's Day celebrations to highlight the strength of the LTTE's women cadres known as the 'Freedom Birds'. The women cadres' role in the 'Sea Tigers', the LTTE's navy, was also given pride of place.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

★ MONKS TO VISIT JAFFNA ON PEACE MISSION

More than one hundred Buddhist monks led by Ven. Madampagama Asseji Thera of Isipathanaramaya, Grandpass, will be visiting Jaffna shortly on a peace mission.

The main aim of this mission, representing Buddhist monks involved in peace and environmental movements, is to meet with the leaders of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Jaffna district, have a dialogue with the citizens and help them to resolve problems. They also hope, if given a chance, to speak to the leaders of the LTTE and make an attempt to free the policemen and civilians in LTTE custody, a spokesman for the monks said.

The team of monks, who are expected to leave by the end of May this year, have received sanction from the government and hope to get a positive response from the LTTE. They hope to stay there for about two weeks, the Thera said.

★ JAYALALITHA WANTS LTTE BAN EXTENDED

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha Jeyaram, told the State Legislative Assembly that she had been asking the Central Government in New Delhi to extend the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by another two years. The LTTE was accused of being responsible for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 and thereafter declared a proscribed organisation.

The Chief Minister also rebutted criticism by Members of the Legislative Assembly belonging to the Congress(I) in Tamil Nadu and the Janatha Party leader Dr. Subramaniam Swamy that she and her administration had struck a secret deal with the Tamil Tigers and the latter was being given freedom to operate in Tamil Nadu despite the ban.

Listing the many omissions of the New Delhi regime, Ms. Jayalalitha said that she had been asking for two more naval stations in Vambar and Poompuhar on the Thanjavur coastline to enable surveillance against smuggling and penetration by the Tigers. Though last year, the Union Minister of State for Internal Security, Mr. Rajesh Pilot, had personally issued instructions to set up the naval stations, nothing had happened. Likewise, Tamil Nadu had been asking the Centre for Rs.80 crore to modernise and equip its police force, but only a sum of Rs.10 crore had been given. She had been asking the Centre to be strict with issuing visas to foreigners, but here again there has been laxity.

★ PRESIDENT SHOULD ACT LIKE A TRUE SINHALA BUDDHIST

'We were happy to hear President Wijetunga's bold statement that he would not make room for Sinhalese to lose their privileges. Due to the wrong advice given to him, he had made some mistakes. The President should not be misguided by those surrounding him and he should act like a true Sinhalese Buddhist', said Mr. Gamini Jayasuriya, the Chairman of the Lanka Maha Bodhi Society and leader of the Sinhala Arakshaka Sangvidhnaya (Sinhala Defence Organisation), speaking at a recent Buddhist public function.

'As long as the President acts boldly according to his conscience, he will be protected by the Sinhala Buddhists. Some newspapers say that federalism is suitable for our country. But we have informed the President that federalism does not suit a country like ours. Russia's economy collapsed because of its federal system of government. If that system is introduced here, the same fate that fell Bosnia would be experienced in this country too.

'Democracy means majority rule. Did the Indo-Sri Lanka Pact get the approval of the majority? Leaders at that time acted arbitrarily. . . Nobody spoke against Thondaman. Even Buddhist priests were silent. . .It is meaningless to give everything that Thondaman asks. I even asked for his removal. But he is still there. I appeal to the President not to give into him', Mr. Jayasuriya said.

★ SLMC OPPOSED TO SPLIT OF NORTHEAST

'There would be no benefit either for the Tamils or Muslims if the merged Northeast Province is split into two. On the contrary, chauvinist forces would be strengthened by the delinking of merged Northeast Province. We would also be rendered incapable of confronting the indiscriminate and forced colonisation of our areas by chauvinist forces. We are opposed to the unconditional merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. However, we are engaged in considering the question of what can be achieved under a merged province under certain conditions. It is for this purpose we have been engaged in discussions with Tamil political leaders. I am confident we will be able reach a proper and reasonable conclusion soon', said Mr. M.H.M. Ashraff, leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, in his Presidential address to party's 12th Annual Convention held on 2 April at Kalmunai in eastern Sri Lanka.

★ CHANDRIKA ON THE ETHNIC QUESTION

In an interview given to the *Sunday Island* (20.3.94), one of the prominent leaders of the opposition Peoples Alliance, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaranatunga, spelt out her position on the ethnic question:

Q: What's your position on the North and East crisis? Is it a terrorist problem as President Wijetunge has stated or is it ethnic in character? And how do you propose to resolve it?

A: that there is only a terrorist problem is absolute rubbish. There is definitely an ethnic problem. And we think the solution to the North and East problem is that the government in power has to offer a very serious package of political solutions to the demands of the Tamil people. And that package, I stress, will not include Eelam, because we are against Eelam. There has been that for many years in this country. And it is the ethnic problem that has resulted in the terrorist problem. the terrorist problem didn't just come up on its own. If the ethnic problem is effectively solved then there will be no terrorist problem. But the Tamil people have lost confidence in this government for obvious reasons. Therefore to build up confidence we have to have some government of their own. So there has to be fairly extensive devolution of power – it should not necessarily be provincial councils. But some other system. For Provincial Councils have a lot of shortcomings. Therefore we have to design some system of devolution of power where the Tamil people will have their rights and will be able to live in dignity. And I'm quite certain that the crushing majority of Tamil people even in the North and East and quite definitely the Tamil people in the rest of the country will not want Eelam. But they have to support Tamil terrorism in the North East simply because they have no other solution. They have either the Tamil terrorists or equal or worse proposition which is the Army. If we give them a political package, I'm sure we will be able to draw the majority of the Tamil people in the North East away from terrorism and towards democratic process. And we intend to do so when we come to power.'

SOUTHERN PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

UNP Suffers Major Reversal-Doubts Over Wijetunga's Leadership

by Rita Sebastian in Colombo

Sri Lanka's ruling United National Party faced its first major electoral reversal in 16 years, when the main Opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) led People's Alliance (PA) won the southern Provincial poll, defeating the UNP in all but one of the province's 21 polling districts.

It is significant that the only polling division where the UNP won, was Balapitiya, the ancestral home of former President Ranasinghe Premadasa.

For the UNP, confident of victory it was a bitter pill to swallow having ridden the crest of a wave since it was voted into power in a landslide victory in 1977.

Political analysts feel that losing the southern provincial poll, was a much needed jolt for the ruling party whose leadership had begun to lose sight of the multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious nature of Sri Lankan society.

Both Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Party General Secretary, Sirisena Cooray have been honest enough to admit, that 'it was a wake up call' or as Prime Minister Wickremesinghe described it a 'red notice being issued by the electorate', which would force the party to take stock of its sins of omission and commission.

And for the first time the internal rumblings, simmering under the surface of what had come to be regarded as a closely knit party have surfaced, although Constitutional Affairs Minister, K.N. Choksy has squashed strong rumours of a major rift in the party following the electoral debacle.

The Premadasa loyalists hold President D.B. Wijetunge responsible for the electoral defeat and have even privately expressed their doubts whether Wijetunge should be the Party's Presidential candidate at the poll scheduled for December 1994.

Wijetunge's nomination was endorsed by the party's executive and working committees in December 1993, at a time when Wijetunge seemed the right choice, inspite of having come in as a stop gap President to fill the vacuum following the assassination of President Premadasa.

All the accolades heaped on Wijetunge when he first took office have however been replaced by a growing disillusionment. His style of leadership seen as a change from the authoritarian and often aggressive governance of his predecessor, has had a negative rather than a positive effect on the fortunes of the party.

Today however the UNP is engaged in a serious re-appraisal of its dismal performance at the poll. Of the many explanations offered for the defeat the one that stands out quite clearly is the jettisoning of the Premadasa legacy. Professor Betram Bastiampillai of the Colombo University said it all when he commented that 'the ordinary voter recognised both ingratitude and traitorship in such insensitivity towards the memory of a man who had built up, with a few others, the UNP when its fortunes had plummeted to a nadir some years ago'.

No sooner Wijetunge took over, he began a process of effectively dismantling the Premadasa apparatus. It was done in the name of eliminating the 'tamasha syndrome' that Premadasa's critics accused him of spending millions of the country's meagre resources on.

The leadership also saw to it that the Premadasa family, Mrs. Hema Premadasa in particular was eased out of the picture. She was often not even accorded the courtesies due to the wife of a former President.

Next came the progressive dismantling of the UNP's electoral base, particularly among the minorities by the strident, majoritarian rhetoric of President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge.

The tree and the vine concept not only disillusioned the minorities, but also angered them. His easy dismissal of the national conflict as 'terrorist and not ethnic' led to a further deterioration of relations with the minorities.

And there was his rift with Tourism and Rural Industrial Development Minister, S. Thondaman over the latter's request that the government resolve some of the outstanding grievances of the plantation sector.

It was ironical that being a Minister in the Wijetunge Cabinet, Thondaman was not given the interview he sought with the President. On the contrary the UNP set out to encourage and assist CWC's dissident General Secretary, S. Sellasamy in the belief that the CWC could be split into two camps and thereby weaken Thondaman's position. A gamble that did not pay off given the near reverence with which the majority of plantation workers hold Mr. Thondaman in. And Wijetunge oblivious to everything else rode his favourite hobby horse, that of an undivided majority community. Clearly the political line adopted by the President did not result in a shift of Sinhala votes from the main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party to the UNP. What the southern electorate has spelt out loud and clear is that it does not subscribe to Sinhala Chauvinism or communal rhetoric. The President repeatedly cautioned by some of his Cabinet colleagues not to pursue this political line chose to disregard their advice. He even proposed that a future President should be elected by Parliament and thereby reduce the candidate's dependence on minority support.

Another reason for the UNP's defeat was the lack of a leader capable of matching the former President Premadasa. Wijetunge was not able to attract large crowds at his meetings nor was he an effective Speaker. He was also surrounded by security that further distanced him from the voter.

Although the southern poll has been dismissed by the UNP as not an indicator of the national political scene the rest of the country could well go the same way if the UNP does not change its stance *vis a vis* the minorities and also address the other urgent problems like bringing down the cost of living and putting more buying power into the hands of the poor and disadavantaged who form the bulk of the country's population.

What faces the party today is a question of leadership. If Wijetunge is seen as a man who cannot deliver the votes he will be seen to be a

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UNP's Stunning Defeat — the Causes

by Prof. Bertram Bastiampillai, University of Colombo.

The stunning and shocking defeat of the United National Party in the Southern province indicted that in spite of ostentatious display and opulent extravaganza, the members of the opposing alliance had appealed to the voters more convincingly. Complaceny had set in and there was often the stain of arrogance in comments and speeches of the UNP leaders and their allies. Their allies who are more remembered as 'fair weather friends' had obviously done little good to the ruling government party. One wonders where the votes that were so presumptuously promised went. After all, in an election the voter is king and no one must take him to be a servile follower and for granted. How can anyone promise to another someone else's vote? Has over fifty years of universal suffrage made leaders so conceited as to assume that a voter is a puppet to be manipulated or manoeuvered?

Opportunist Alliances

Pre-electoral alliances, with no concern for public rectitude, left a distaste, suspicion, and aversion in the minds of the tested nationalist voters of the South. Some crossed from party to party and made it evident to the voter how untrustworthy and unreliable politically they were. People who were critics of the UNP yesterday turned into those who sang a litany of praises of the same party today, and however ingenious their rationalisation of their behaviour and metamorphosis be, none seriously believed them. Then, there were politically ineffective and sterile influences which brought nothing good to the UNP such as that of the Liberal lot. In fact, the UNP allowed itself to be criticized as unscrupulous and expedient when they made the party into a doorless open *ambalama*. Compromises are comprehensible to voters but not opportunistic embraces.

Neglect

The South had been the nursery of two insurrections of the young who exploded in frustration. Yet, what has been done following the Youth Commission's recommendations is negligible. A diagnosis took place but no remedy was attempted. Even the provision to allow those under 35 years of age to contest the bygone elections to the local bodies was abused because the ruling lot saw in that provision for perpetuating their own family powers by obtaining nominations for their progeny. Years of neglect cannot be rectified by a plethora of pre-election promises or symbolic condescending gestures. The South had been forgotten for long.

Abuse of Democratic Process

Tampering with democratic processes is always deplorable. If there had been a little patience demonstrated by allowing the former Provincial Council to function, the voter would not have seen revulsion so sharply. The former Governor never played the game fairly when he endeavoured in every way to keep the opposition coalition out of power in the Council. Afterwards, when the judicial courts make it clear that there could be no more prevarication, then the Governor and the government yielded with little grace too late. Then the party instead of reconciling itself to the inevitable fate left no stone unturned to scuttle the Council. It succeeded but with what ill consequence? Why should the ruling party want no dissent, an essential concomitant of democracy, but only compliance, conformity and omnipotence in regard to devolution and provincial councils. It has left doubts as to whether the government is sincere in working the 13th amendment and Provincial Councils.

Jettisoning Premadasa

Then, despite occasional letters of caution and disagreement, in the press, the ruling party wanted to wash its hands of former President Ranasinghe Premadasa. It assiduously set out to jettison everything that was associated with the former President no sooner than he was cremated. All evil was ascribed to him unmindful of the fact that he had his own coterie of followers. It is significant that only in an area associated with him that the UNP was able to win, albeit by a slender majority. The ordinary voter recognised both ingratitude and traitorship in such insensitivity towards the memory of one who built up along with a few others the UNP when its fortunes had plummeted to a nadir some years ago.

Lack of Morality and Accountability

Moreover, recent times, there have been several instances of callous disregard of and utter indifference to public morality and propriety. Appointments with only a preoccupation with patronage have left the public disenchanted and even disgusted with the public service, both local and foreign. Even if one holds the spoon, one must learn to disburse with it prudently. Unfortunately, the office of Executive President and the present constitutional set-up introduced in 1978 and amended to suit person and party

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liability. The next question is, who can replace him? Two names that have come up are those of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and that of former Minister Gamini Dissanayake who recently returned to the UNP fold and is expected to be sworn in as an MP on the national list.

Ranil Wickremesinghe seems to be the more plausible of the two candidates as successor to the leadership for he is unlikely to cause any rift in the party and belongs to the same generation as Chandrika Kumaratunge who is increasingly being suggested as the SLFP's choice in preference to Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike. But it is unlikely that Mrs. Bandaranaike will agree to be replaced by Chandrika although, according to SLFP sources she would be the best choice in defeating a UNP candidate.

Gamini Dissanayake on the other hand is a seasoned campaigner and could well match Kumaratunge, but his credibility has suffered a great deal given the manner in which he left the Democratic United Front (DUNF) and re-joined the UNP. He is being seen as an opportunist and will not find favour with the Premadasa loyalists.

However it is too early to judge whether the party will decide to change the Presidential candidate in midstream, specially because it could well give the wrong signal to the electorate that the party is confused and without direction. On the other hand it needs a new image, and only a new leadership can give it that and help it to re-build its electoral base and re-emerge as a dominant force in the Sri Lankan political scene.

rather than the public tempts the office-bearers towards disaster. Accountability and answerability are ignored and pronouncements and practices that follow can alienate the citizen.

Assertive Majoritarianism

The North-East problem needed more serious concern. It was not to be dismissed as mere terrorism alone. Again, in a plural society with a diversity of ethnicities, religions and languages it is not an assertive majoritarianism that pays dividends but magnanimous and liberal accommodativeness. When the doyen of politicians, W. Dahanayake, contested in the South he was always concerned of the Muslim voter – a member of the minority.

Corruption and Nepotism

While what went against the governing party can be delineated as above, it must also be remembered that today there is so much talk about corruption in high places which the media sometimes speaks of. Seventeen years of rule has given the party a sense of impurity so that one could sin without fear. But surely the deluge comes sooner or later.

Today, chapter and verse are quoted in proof of nepotism, corruption, and favouritism which rages with utter contempt toward what is honest and right. The public service, whether it be in charge of security, law, order and administration or finance is diagnosed as politicised, pliant, partisan and spoilt and demoralised. Credibility in the politicised governmental services is poor and its efficiency is lamentable if one looks at 'Letters to the Editor'.

Chandrika's Campaign

There, of course, was also the energetic effort of the Alliance and its leaders, especially that of Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunge Bandaranaike. She had already garnered over three lakhs of votes in the Western Province and she took to grassroots level canvassing enthusiastically. She drew crowds and not jeers as her brother had left the SLFP and made it unequivocally clear that the SLFP was now a more wholesome party than it was when there was the 'brother-sister' incurable rift. Also, when Mrs. Bandaranaike announced that Chandrika was in charge of the electoral campaign she left the citizens free of any ambiguity as regards who wielded authority. So much of the qualm that could plague the voter was removed and he could channel his vote of protest into a positive vote, and the voter felt that the old party that had been, had turned stale.

Deprivation

Finally privatisation has glamorised a few but the gradual dismantling of welfarism, even notwithstanding the occasional token of concern, has hurt many so suddenly and deeply. So the veneer of prosperity can be misleading. Beneath continued deprivation and disadvantage, the UNP has to take stock and chart a more constructive course.

Wijetunga's Chauvinism Backfires as the Jathika Chintanya Clique Come to his Defence

by our Special Correspondent

Deviating from his predecessor's proclaimed belief in a multi–ethnic and multi–cultural society, President D.B. Wijetunga's recent efforts at mobilising the Sinhala Buddhists on a strident chauvinist platform seem to have backfired. Full of sound and fury, his rhetoric signified nothing, at least at this juncture, to the Sinhala Buddhist voter in the southern province. His valiant efforts not only failed to stir passions in Ruhuna, a region generally assumed to be the unassailable heartland of Sinhala patiotism, but also would appear to have rebounded to land the man in a political tight spot of his own creation.

During the past several months, Premadasa loyalists in the party have been seething with anger over DBW's obvious attempt to sideline the memory of their slain late leader, and reject his political legacy. They were particularly angry at the President for having deployed many known anti–Premadasa personalities, including Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, to make cheap jibes at election propaganda meetings with a view to denigrating the former President. The UNP's unprecedented defeat in the southern Provincial Council elections has provided the ideal opportunity for them to strike back, and they seem to be doing it with a vengeance. No sooner the results were out, accusing him of being responsible for the electoral debacle, they did not conceal their threat to stop DBW from being the UNP's candidate at the forthcoming presidential election.

Tactical Move

Sensing the hostile undercurrents in his party, and more interested in protecting his position than in saving the Sinhala–Buddhist nation, DBW was quick to make some tactical moves to appease the Premadasa loyalists among whom the UNP's General Secretary and Cabinet Minister Mr. Sirisena Cooray is the most prominent one. Mr. Cooray's suggestion at the UNP's Working Committee meeting (4 April) that the party should mark the May Day (Premadasa was assassinated 1 May last year while participating in a May Day Procession) this year with religious ceremonies commemorating the former President, was promptly endorsed by DBW. He also readily agreed to unveil a statue of Premadasa in Colombo on the same day.

Meanwhile, DBW is also busily engaged in trying to build a base of his own within the party and consolidate his position by wooing the support of all those UNP parliamentarians who have not openly identified with the Premadasa loyalist wing. Part of this game plan is to make Mr. Gamini Dissanayake a National List MP and bring him into the Cabinet. Discarded by the former President from his cabinet and having been one of those chiefly instrumental in the ill-fated impeachment attempt against him, Gamini is now busy mustering support among the ruling party's parliamentarians whom he had 'looked after' during his heyday and among those sections of the powerful business community which has bankrolled the UNP since 1977. However, there is an obvious contradiction between DBW's strident chauvinism and Gamini's oft repeated moderate line on the ethnic question. Gamini was a key player in the Indo–Sri Lanka agreement of July 1987 and his recent statements emphasise the

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need for a negotiated solution to the ethnic problem. He seems to entertain the view that his known position on the ethnic question ensures a line of communication to the CWC and other minority parties and groups, and hence is hopeful of coming to some kind of understanding with them in time for the Presidential elections.

As it has become very obvious even to the least politically astute in the UNP that the party cannot win an election without the minority vote, President DBW who has ensnared himself in a political mess *vis–a–vis* the Tamils and Muslims, has apparently come to the belief that Gamini's assistance would be useful in this respect. But whether Gamini, who has discredited himself by engaging in the most poorly executed acts of political opportunism ever since the death of his colleague and co–founder of the Democratic United National Front (DUNF), can deliver the minority vote, or for that matter even a section of the Sinhala vote, is extremely doubtful.

Displeasure with Gamini

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe and Mr. Sirisena Cooray do not fail to miss any opportunity to express their strong displeasure over Gamini's re–entry into the UNP and the prospect of his elevation to cabinet rank. They have pointed out that despite the prominence given by DBW to him during the southern provincial elections campaign, Gamini could not muster this time for the UNP even a fraction of the votes cast for the DUNF in the last elections, and this fact was highlighted by the Lake House 'Sunday Observer' which does not seem to be enthused by Gamini's homecoming to the UNP. The Premadasa loyalist faction of the UNP would never forgive Gamini for the impeachment move and the personal attacks made against their slain leader.

That Gamini in some way will be able to deliver the votes of the minorities to the UNP may in all probability turn out to be an illusion. DBW's dangerous proposition of seeking power through an 'undivided Sinhala–Buddhist majority vote' to neutralise the 'disproportionate role played by the minorities' not only did not materialise, but also quite unwittingly helped the Tamil political parties and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress to fully realise the value of keeping the block vote of their respective communities out of the UNP's and SLFP's reach. It would seem that none of the minority leaders are prepared to strike a deal with either of the major Sinhala parties basically because most of them are today fairly convinced that it will not help them in any way except dilute the effect of their current work to harness the consolidated vote of their own communities. Thanks to the political antics of DBW, each minority leader in the island has now found a sure way of boosting his bargaining power. Hence the President may soon discover that even Mr. Dissanayake, who could once count on the staunch support of the most important minority leader, Mr. Saumyamoorthy Thondaman, cannot deliver the goods in time for the election.

The other point is that DBW will look an absolutely foolish opportunist if he, with a view to resurrecting the political fortunes by adopting his slain predecessor's approach to the ethnic question and the minorities, were to retract from the pro–majoritarian outpourings which had the minorities aghast. However, his ideological mentors may insist that he would not deviate from the stance which had earned him the praise of being the 'true son of genuine Sinhala–Buddhist parentage'. As soon as the UNP's debacle in the SP elections became clear, those of the Jathika Chintanaya clique, who have had a strong influence on DBW's thinking in the recent past, were out to put in their best to prove to the world (and to DBW himself) that the defeat of the UNP had nothing to do with the stand taken by the President on the ethnic question. They voiced their view that their ideology was still close to the heart of the average Sinhala–Buddhist voters, but they went against the UNP for other reasons thereby emphasising that DBW must persist in the line recommended by the Jathika Chintanaya clique. In the days following the election, this refrain was reflected in the columns of the daily 'The Island', the editorial policy of which would appear to have come under the influence of Prof. Piyasena Dissanayake, another pundit of the Jathika Chintanaya school of thought, who incidentally started the media blitz against Prof. Tambiah's book, 'Buddhism Betrayed?'. In this maladroit exercise, they deliberately concealed the fact that the President, during the election campaign, appealed to the people to give him a 'strong hand and a firm mandate' to deal with the ethnic question/terrorism in the Northeast, but the people decisively rejected his appeal.

Desperate Bid

In a desperate bid to redeem their beloved leader, DBW the JCites characteristically chose their natural *bete noire*, CWC President Mr. S. Thondaman, as the target. Thondaman, who was deliberately kept away by DBW from the southern election campaign platforms, gleefully embraced the occasion of the aftermath of the election defeat to condemn DBW's 'communalism' in no uncertain terms. The editorial in the daily 'The Island' (30.3.94) under the title, 'Who are the Communalists?', purporting to be a reply to Mr. Thondaman, simply asserted that the Tamils were the sole progenitors of communalism in the once peaceful island of Sri Lanka! On the previous day, the paper carrying an editorial on the same theme observed that 'Ruhuna, to give the historical name for the south, has always been a stout upholder of the integrity of the territorial sovereignty (sic) of the country. Even Parakrama Bahu the Great had a mighty task subduing Ruhuna and he did it, according to historians, at such a tremendous cost that the country was bereft of leadership for years to come. To recall Ruhuna's patriotism is undoubtedly to make some people uncomfortable like Mr.Vasudeva Nanayakara who is an internationalist to the core. . .'.

A JCite columnist called 'Sena', warned Thondaman and the Tamil groups not to harp on the fact that the people of the south had rejected the President's line on the ethnic problem. He wrote, 'What are they trying to drive at? Are they not trying to tell the President and the government that the Sinhala people are no longer interested in the northeast and other related issues? It must however be pointed out that the Northeast conflict and related matters were not in issue at the southern provincial council election at all. These issues did not figure in any significant way during the hustings not because the people were not concerned with them, but simply because the people had very pressing local issues which called for immediate remedies. . .In these cir-

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UNP Rebuffed in the South as Wijetunge Alienates Minorities

by Taraki

The UNP has not only messed up its once useful relationship with the minorities but has ignominiously been trounced in the Sinhala heartland as well.

It has transpired beyond any doubt (much to the utter dismay of the President and his people I am sure) that the majority of the Sinhala voters are in no mood to be swayed by passions to which the UNP tried hard to appeal from the time Premadasa was killed.

Today its leaders have been compelled to survey the dismal prospect of facing the Presidential elections minus the bloc vote of the minorities which it rejected on principle and the undivided vote of the Sinhalese which it openly cherished and passionately wooed. What is the U.N.P., with D.B. at the helm going to do now?

Since it is the most viable and tempting option available, will it try to fall back on the Premadasa formula? viz. strike deals with minority leaders who can deliver strategic vote banks. But this appears to be almost an impossible task at present, firstly because most Tamil parties are planning to have talks with Chandrika with a view to negotiating a common program for the Presidential elections, and secondly because none of them are in a position to change the minds of their supporters even if the UNP – under D.B. Wijetunge's leadership manages to re-establish a dialogue with them.

'No self respecting Tamil will vote for the UNP and its present leadership' said a senior member of the TULF who expressed great satisfaction that Chandrika had led the P.A. to victory in the South. The statement of the TULF leader is a fair reflection of the mood among the minority parties today. It is in this respect that one has to view the obvious fallacy in UNP Gen. Sec. the Hon. Mr. Sirisena Cooray's statement that his party's defeat in the South won't affect their performance at the national level.

It has been proved at the last Presidential elections that at the national level the UNP cannot save itself from defeat if it does not have the minorities on its side. It should also be pointed out here that Mr. Cooray made a similar face saving statement soon after the local Government elections in the East in which he claimed, that the victory of the Tamil groups was equal to a UNP victory. This pronouncement thoroughly annoyed those groups which had secured a substantial vote among the Tamils by campaigning bitterly against the views expressed by the UNP leader on the ethnic question. (In fact the TELO-PLOTE went to the extent of distributing a pamphlet during the last days of the campaign which contained a list of statements the President had made on the ethnic issue with a terse admonition at the end of it that the Tamils should have nothing to do with the UNP in the future.)

The anger which was simmering among the Tamil groups since the time the UNP began to uphold and propagate the President's unique pronouncements on the ethnic question was greatly exacerbated by the high-handed manner in which the UNP engaged in electioneering in the east.

Today there are five parties and groups which can determine political trends among the minorities. They are the CWC, SLMC. TELO-PLOTE alliance, the TULF and the EPRLF.

A brief survey of the current state of the UNP's relationship with them – under D.B.'s leadership of course – will reveal that it cannot even remotely consider the possibilty of pulling its act together *vis-a-vis* the Tamils and Muslims in time for the Presidential poll.

Let us first consider the CWC. Thondaman made use of his dispute with the UNP's leadership to consolidate the support of the upcountry Tamil people. He mobilised them mainly by appealing to the general antipathy which aroused in them due to the perception that the UNP was hell bent on undermining their political and economic existence in the plantation sector. Thonda was helped in no small measure in his effort by the fact that the leaders of the Hela Urumaya were praising the President for bringing the CWC leader to heel. In other words the manner in which Thonda has mobilised his people and sustained the momentum of that mobilisation totally precludes any possibility of his striking a deal with the UNP under its present leadership simply for the reason that he will lose his hold on the upcountry Tamils if he were to ask them to vote for the present leadership of the United National Party.

In addition to this the ongoing efforts to promote Mr. Sellasamy and get Chandrasekeran who was released from prison last week, back into upcountry politics have created conditions for Thondaman to seriously contemplate burning his boats with the UNP at the appropriate juncture. Unless Sri Kotha takes some far reaching and drastic steps to change its present leadership before the Presidential polls – something which seems unlikely at the moment. Hence Thondaman, like every other Tamil leader, expressed great satisfaction that the UNP leadership's stand on the ethnic question had signally failed to score votes among Sinhala people in the South.

Thondaman, as we know was not one who minced his words about what he really thought about D.B.'s line on the minorities in general and the upcountry Tamils in particular. The leader of the SLMC Mr. Ashraff also mobilised his constituency in the east mainly on the anti UNP feelings which were running high among his supporters as a result of

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cumstances it must be reiterated that these (Tamil and Left) parties and individuals will be able to fool none but themselves by their antics'. *The Island*, **31.3.94).**

The essence of the Jathika Chintanaya clique's message to the minorities in general and to the President in particular is that, once the ephemeral problems which distract the ancient Sinhala patriotism of the average man or woman in the south is out of the way, he or she would positively respond to the stridently nationalist appeals which characterised the UNP's approach to the ethnic question after Premadasa died. The ultimate anxiety of Sinhala politics is that, despite the irresistible rise of a genuinely con–communal leader like Mrs. Chandrika Kumaranatunga, the above JCite message sometimes happens to be correct.

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the manner in which the government was trying to secure victory at the local government polls recently with the connivance of some members of the police force.

Apart from this Ashraff is aware that he has much more work to do in order to further expand and consolidate his base among the eastern province Muslims – an effort which would require of him a strident anti–UNP stand, for it is that party's support base in the eastern Muslim community which he has to undermine to succeed in his current task. So Ashraff also will be beyond the UNP's reach at this juncture.

The recently held local government polls have shown that the TELO-PLOTE alliance is a force to be reckoned with in the eastern province. The PLOTE on its own contested and won the Vavuniya Urban Council and is quite powerful politically in those areas of the Vavuniya district which are not under the LTTE's control. Both groups as everyone is aware were close to President Premadasa at one time, (not, however, so close as the EPDP) and he in many issues which concerned them had kept the possibility of personal communication with him ever open. Though they were quite disgruntled with the Mangala Moonesinghe Select Committee, Premadasa shrewdly managed their relationship with the government in such a way that they could not find any overt cause to denounce the UNP. But once President D.B. came to power they were harshly ignored and lines of communication were closed. The tentative effort on the part of the Prime Minister to send them feelers through the inconsequential Dr. Chanaka Amaratunge did not get anywhere except further exacerbating the silent annoyance caused by the imperious manner in which the exercise was launched in the first place. Then the statements of the President left the TELO and PLOTE with no option but to criticise the UNP for adopting a chauvinist line. And when D.B. promised his constituency that he would somehow hold the referendum to separate the east from the north the PLOTE was compelled to launch an anti-UNP campaign. Then Govindan Karunakaran M.P. for Batticaloa, who had routinely voted with the government on the emergency, began to condemn D.B.'s stand on the ethnic question.

The TELO-PLOTE alliance in the east was deeply antagonised by the UNP when it took the most unpleasant step of recruiting into its ranks assorted ex-militants who had been sacked from these two organisations on various occasions. Many of these lost badly despite the scandalous support extended to them by certain sections of the police. Since then they have declared war on those hapless civilians whom they suspect of having voted for the TELO-PLOTE alliance. These terrified civilians have been beaten and asked to pay up for their 'crime' (since this money is extorted by members of UNP one wonders what happens to it). These incidents were reported in the Tamil press. And then alleged attempts by the Batticaloa branch of the United National Party to abduct and bribe some elected members of the TELO-PLOTE alliance in order to capture power in the Batticaloa Municipal Council on April 4 has further antagonised the two Tamil groups which for reasons best known to him, Mr. Sirisena Cooray seems to think are the same thing as the UNP. He is obviously living in the past where Premadasa could point to very few enemies among the Tamils and Muslims (although he gave them very little except his soothingly conciliatory rhetoric).

The sudden transfer of Batticaloa's G.A. Mr. Mounagurusamy who is TELO M.P. Govindan Karunakaran's brother-in-law along with Mr. Muthulingam, director of Education, who is the M.P.'s uncle has added to the list of problems. The Batticaloa G.A. played an important role in the inquiry which resulted in the Election Commissioner's scathing report on the gross election malpractices which took place in the district.

I need not expand on how TULF and the EPRLF feel about the leadership of the UNP. It is a good thing indeed that the foolish confidence generated by the despicable urge which seems to have animated the UNP's desire to win in the east, has been shattered by the southern voter. Those who may argue that the south is the exception should realise that having significantly failed to secure the DUNF vote, and given its current standing among the minorities, the UNP is bound to find the going quite tough in the western, northwestern, central, Uva and the eastern provinces, where the minorities will play a decisive role in any poll.

The government will also find that while it has imperiously but foolishly closed all lines of communication with all parties and groups among the minorities, Mrs. Kumaratunge is the only Sinhala leader of any consequence today who happens to know most Tamil leaders personally mainly as a result of her late husband's efforts to bring about ethnic reconciliation and peace to the country.

Although certain aspects of her 'walauwa' manners may not go down too well with the political culture of many Tamils from the northeast, they recognise that she is their best bet for negotiating an honourable settlement to the Tamil problem. She has also powerfully projected the image of a person who might speak up boldly for the minorities.

This then is the politically instructive but morally deplorable story of how the U.N.P. deliberately, shortsightedly and foolishly lost Premadasa's friends, among the Tamils and Muslims and found too late that the Sinhala voter is no more prepared to wallow in the unhealthy mire of majoritarian claims of domination over the minorities.

(*Sunday Island*, **27/3/94**).

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Corruption Galore

The February 1994 issue of 'Counterpoint' an English language monthly from Sri Lanka has focused its attention on the scale of government corruption and nepotism under President Wijetunga. The blatant nature of official connivance and participation in this crime is exemplified by the recent removal of Ms. Nelum Gamage, the Bribery Commissioner who is primarily responsible for the investigation and prosecution of offenders. The Commissioner's removal and the demotion of her deputy are attributed to an attempt on the part of the government to prevent proper investigation of persons connected with the ruling party accused of corruption

In its editorial comment, the journal states: 'To remove the Bribery Commissioner and demote her successor because that department was investigating the misdeeds of one's friends and backers was the last straw or so we thought until the Presidential pardon granted to two people who had made a mockery of the entire judicial process. That surely, was less defensible. The mere fact that we are now reduced to arguing which of President Wijetunga's horrendous actions is the worst is the indication of the depths of the despair to which we have sunk. After all it is only academic whether, for instance, his racism is more damaging than his contempt for the law. The country is reaping the tragic consequences of the combined ignorance, foolishness and dishonesty of this President.'

The following are some among a large number of instances of corruption, in which the President himself figures, 'Counterpoint' has brought out into the open:

★ **THE OILS AND FATS CASE:** In August 1989, when Mr. Wijetunga was Prime Minister, he wrote to Assistant General Manager, Prima Ceylon Ltd asking him 'kindly speak to Mr. Primus and make arrangements to buy up this Corporation. You can negotiate in regard to the terms'. The letter was accompanied by a copy of the advertisement to tender for the purchase of the state–owned Oils and Fats Corporation. On 10 January 1992, Prima completed the purchase of the Corporation on terms that were decidely advantageous to the Company. The Corporation was purchased at about half its tendered value because only a fraction of the purchase price was paid up front, with the balance to be paid in instalments over ten years. Given the depreciation of the rupee over the ten year period, the transaction would lose the country many millions.

★ **THE 100,000 METRE CLOTH CASE:** On 5 September 1993, after assuming office as President, Mr. Wijetunga strongly recommended a total waiver of duty on 100,000 metres of cloth, valued at 130 million rupees, manufactured by Gartex Industrial Lanka Ltd, a Free Trade Zone Co., which was to be sold in the local market as an exception to normal rules. The revenue lost to the state on this transaction has been estimated at 90 million rupees. The only reason for such an unprecedented waiver of duty and the resultant loss to the state appears to be contained in a terse letter written by President Wijetunga to the Director General of Customs which read: 'Please attend to this case. I known (sic) this case well.'

★ **THE HAIR DYE CASE:** Premasiri Stores have been importers of Bigen Hair Dye from Hoyu Co. Ltd from Japan for over four years. On 22 April 1993 Premasiri submitted to Customs an invoice which indicated that the cost of one unit of Bigen Hair Dye (containing 12 bottles of powder each) was US $11.60. However on 13 November 1993 a revised invoice was submitted by Premasiri which showed cost of the same item as having been reduced to US $6.44, a reduction of almost 80%. The two reasons given by Premasiri by letter dated 15 August 1993 and confirmed by the Japanese Co. by their letter dated 25th August 1993 were: (a) difficulty in selling this brand of hair dye due to competition from cheaper Indian products available in the market; and (b) the US dollar had appreciated considerably during the last four years whereas the Indian rupee had been devalued.

Customs began investigations in relation to the drastic price reduction because of the implications it would have on the import duty due from Premasiri. Investigations did not reveal any drastic price reduction in the over–the–counter sales of Bigen Hair Dye in retail outlets, and the intention to defraud the Customs became clearer when it was found that Premasiri had misclassified the import under a category which attracted only 10% duty whereas it should have been classified under a category that attracted 20% duty.

The customs investigations concluded that Premasiri had committed fraud on two counts: (a) undervaluation and wrong classification with the intention of paying a lower duty. The total duty paid was Rs.1,193,554.00 which was less than half the duty payable, and 'the loss to the State by this fraudulent evasion is Rs.1,463,972.13'.

But nothing came out of this Customs finding. The Customs Department comes under the direct control of President Wijetunga. The case was dropped, the fraud condoned, the importer was allowed to go scot free and the country lost. Incidentally, the proprietors of Premasiri Stores are well known powerful allies and generous contributors to the UNP.

★ **THE TOYOTA VAN CASE:** Manamperuma Traders import and sell motor vehicles. On 12 November 1993 the paperwork for the clearance from Customs of five Toyota Passenger Vans which was undertaken by the Company's authorised Clearance Agent listed the vehicles under the category of 'Delivery Vans' and this was done in order to reduce the duty payable.

In addition the declared value was found to be very much lower than the normally accepted valuation for these type of vehicles. Only Freudenbergs, Toyota Company's Agents were entitled to certify the CIF value of these vehicles. Investigations revealed that, in order to defraud the Customs from receiving its legitimate duty on these vehicles a certificate of valuation carrying a forged Freudenbergs' Company seal and signature had been submitted to the Customs. The employees of Manamperuma Traders admitted in the course of Customs investigations to manufacturing a forged replica of Freudenbergs Company's seal which is, in fact, in the possession of the customs Investigative and Surveillance Unit. It was also disclosed during investigations that this type of fraud had been committed by the

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Mohamed's Cancelled Visit to Jaffna – A Chance Missed

by Jehan Perera

Mr. M.H. Mohamed, Speaker of Sri Lanka's Parliament, had finalised all arrangements to visit Jaffna on 1 April. There he was to meet LTTE leaders, including Mr. V. Prabhakaran 'to explore the possibility of getting the peace process moving'. But at the last minute, President Wijetunge summoned Mr. Mohamed and caused the cancellation of his proposed visit.

If Speaker M.H. Mohamed had gone to Jaffna, he would have been the first high ranking government politician to enjoy the hospitality of the LTTE in the area under their control. The directive to Mr. Mohamed to postpone his visit due to 'logistical difficulties' is in line with President Wijetunga's hardline stance on negotiations with the LTTE.

Mr. Mohamed would probably have been treated with a great deal of courtesy. But it would have been surprising if he had got much else.

Jaffna is a city with a very poor resource base and is starved of luxuries. Not even the LTTE had air conditioned housing and mouth watering chocolate cakes that the rulers in the south routinely enjoy. A month ago the Sarvodaya team that went to Jaffna observed only fans and were served rather ordinary cakes.

But it is not only 5-star hospitality that Mr. Mohamed would have missed. It is quite unlikely that the LTTE would have offered any realistic solution. There are some fairly obvious reasons for this.

However badly the war is going for them, which it is not, and however much the people of Jaffna desire an end to war, which they do earnestly, the LTTE has many compelling reasons to be wary of peace. But the LTTE is not alone in having such a perverse if natural attitude.

Arms dealers and nationalist extremists in the south too have natural interests that lie in war rather than in peace. More than anything else war gives them their reason for survival. If there were to be peace soon, there would be no more need for so much of arms purchases to be made. A large amount of money, by way of arms contracts, would no longer be there to be earned.

If there were to be peace, all those who today have a half-way respectable forum in society to raise the communal cry would undoubtedly lose their platforms. There would be no more impassioned jingoistic speeches to be made and no more snide newspaper articles to be written in pseudonyms known by like-minded admirers and read by the general public.

So too would the return of peace considerably reduce the survival prospects of the LTTE, at least in terms of the positions they now hold. In a context of war in which they are keeping out a 'dreaded army' to use the former Army Commander Cecil Waidyaratne's dramatic language, the retention of arms and leadership by the LTTE can hardly be disputed by the civilian population of Jaffna.

Consequently, the government's impractical call to the LTTE to lay down arms as a pre-condition for negotiations gives them the excuse they are happy to have. No ruling class is ever enthusiastic about shedding its monopoly over power.

Dire consequences

But giving up power is what peace is and a return to the democratic practice of people voting at multi-party elections would necessarily entail the LTTE. A return to conditions of peace and normalcy could have another entirely natural, but possible dire consequence which bears upon the LTTE leadership in particular.

It would mean that the LTTE's tight control on the entry of outsiders into the north would be ended. This would make assassination attempts by those who seek revenge from the LTTE for the murders of their own leaders, not excluding former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, a great deal easier.

Given all these negative implications of peace to the LTTE, expecting realistic peace proposals from them is to expect too much. A great deal of persuasion will be required before people who have so much to lose are willing to take that risk. What can reasonably be expected is a response and rethinking based on an external initiative.

The first steps for peace must, therefore, necessarily come from the south, from those who do not gain by war. While development organisations would benefit from peace which would enable them to resume their funded activities in the north, they do not have the power to make political offers. They can only lay a psychological groundwork upon which a political solution may be built.

There is no getting away from the crucial role that the government has to play in this regard. That is why the visit to the north by Speaker M.H. Mohamed, and the follow-up to it by the government, had such a potential importance. The opportunity presented by Mr. Mohamed's courage should not have been missed.

True enough, Mr. Mohamed modestly and cautiously downplayed the significance of his visit by describing it first as only a 'private and goodwill mission.' In his most recent statement announcing the postpone-

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Company over many years. In this particular case, the total loss to the State was Rs.614,930.

The finding of the Customs Inquiry Officer was that the five Toyota Vans should be forfeited, and that Mr. Manamperuma should be fined Rs.500,000 the senior wharf clerk who acted as clearing agent should be fined RS.100,000 and two other employees of the Company should be fined Rs.50,000 each.

Outcome? Tremendous pressure was brought upon the Director General of Customs to sack the Customs Officer who conducted the investigations and brought the culprits to book. Instead of sacking him the Director was able to save his job by transferring him to the innocuous 'Policy Planning Unit' from where he would not be a threat to any big–time fraudsters. On express instructions from high–above, the five forfeited Toyota Passenger Vans were returned to Mr. Manamperuma. Need it be said that Mr. M. is another generous contributor to the UNP coffers!

'Referendum: Irresponsible Ill-timed & Unjust' – TULF

The mainly Tamil political party, the TULF has protested strongly against President D.B. Wijetunge's decision to hold a referendum on the demerger of the North-East, describing the move as irresponsible, ill-timed and unjust.

In a toughly worded statement the Tamil United Liberation Front said it believed an interim President, not directly elected by the people should not initiate measures of far reaching consequences without seeking a mandate from the people.

The TULF also disclosed that the late Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, during the talks on the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord had given an assurance that the provision for a referendum on the N-E merger was merely to allay Sinhala extremists' fears and it would not be implemented.

The statement said:

'The TULF protests strongly at the announcement of President Wijetunga that a referendum will be held soon to de-link the Eastern Province from the North-East Unit. President Wijetunge has been in the recent past, making statements without much thought on the Tamil problem and this is yet another statement which will obstruct the peace process and close the door for any negotiated settlement. The TULF and other Tamil parties have always objected to the holding of a referendum for valid reasons but heedless of such objections, President Wijetunga harps again that a referendum will be held soon.

'Ever since the question of devolution and the unit of devolution came up, Tamil parties have been strongly advocating one single Provincial Administration for the North and East. The TULF made it abundantly clear to President Jayawardene and to Shri Rajiv Gandhi that only one administration can ensure the safety, security and well-being of the Tamils and Muslims of the North and East. Shri Rajiv Gandhi accepted the validity of the Tamil case and provided for one single Administration with one Council, one Governor and one Board of Ministers for the North and East in the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July, 1987.

'Of course, there was a provision for a referendum. When the TULF and other Tamil parties objected strongly to this term in the Accord, Shri Rajiv Gandhi assured us that this clause in the Accord was merely to enable President Jayewardene to allay the fears of some Sinhalese extremists and he further assured us that the referendum will never be held and precisely for this reason, provision was being made for the President to postpone the referendum. Indeed both President Jayewardene and President Premadasa postponed the referendum on more than one occasion giving due respect to the unwritten understanding between President Jayewardene and Shri Rajiv Gandhi. Apparently these diplomatic nuances do not seem to bother President Wijetunga.

'While all those arguments which persuaded both Shri Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene to the inclusion of the provisions in the Accord for one Administration still hold good, there are many more reasons against a referendum being held.

'Thousands of TAMILS and MUSLIMS have fled from all parts of the Eastern Province. They are either internally displaced or have fled to India. Conditions are certainly not conducive for them to return to their homes. Their names numbering nearly a hundred thousand have not been entered in the Electoral Register. It will indeed be a farce to hold a referendum when so many thousands of Tamils and Muslims are not there to cast their votes.

'It is well-known that many thousands of Sinhalese new settlers have been inducted into Trincomalee and Amparai Districts. They

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ment of his visit, however, Mr. Mohamed was more forthcoming when he said that he had wished 'to explore the possibility of getting the peace process moving.'

Even if his visit had meant just that, by building on the goodwill already created by the earlier visits of the Christian bishops and the Sarvodaya team, Mr. Mohamed could certainly, have helped to create the right environment in which concrete government proposals could have been put forward for the LTTE to respond to.

Heavy baggage

Despite the positive appeal of Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunge to the minorities and her politically courageous commitment to a multi-ethnic and plural concept of Sri Lankan society, the massive historical baggage of heavy-handed Sinhala nationalism that the SLFP still carries around with it cannot be easily dismissed.

Neither is Mrs. Kumaratunge's ability to overcome the traditionalists and 'Hela Urumaya' group within the SLFP still evident. The minority vote may not go to the UNP under its present leadership. But it has yet to make its tryst with destiny in the form of an SLFP which is still not even headed by the forward-looking Mrs. Kumaratunge.

While the result of the Southern Province elections has probably stunned the government, its huge defeat may turn out to be a blessing in disguise to it and to the country at large. At the very least it has shown us all that appealing to the imagined or real hatreds of one community against another is not the best way to win votes. The Sinhalese voter has discredited the communal card.

The lack of the expected last minute impact by the cross over of big names like Gamini Dissanayake, Ronnie de Mel and Anura Bandaranaike has also rather convincingly demonstrated that policies matter more than personalities. The fact is that the trio had nothing new to offer the southern voter in terms of policies. Neither they nor the rest of the UNP had a tangible vision of development and peace to offer the south. They had no positive cause to champion and so their speeches lacked conviction.

On the other hand if the government can get its act together with respect to devising a policy for regaining peace in the north, then the impact of well established liberal heavy weights like Gamini Dissanayake, Ronnie de Mel and Anura Bandaranaike on the feelings of safety of the minorities will be extremely positive. The good relations that Mr. Dissanayake in particular enjoys with Mr. Thondaman and with the Indian Government are assets that the UNP should seriously be considering.

are given state land, financial assistance for housing and every type of relief and rehabilitation payments, irrespective of their period of residence their names have been entered in the Voters Register. This has swelled the Sinhalese population in the Eastern Province. It will be totally unfair and against all international tenets to permit these persons who had recently come into the Eastern Province to participate in the referendum to determine the issue of merger. The TULF has always maintained that those Sinhalese who were settled in the Eastern Province in contravention of land laws and in breach of understandings given by Prime Ministers have no legal or moral right to decide the future of the Eastern Province.

'The Armed Forces and the Police are present, in every village of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai Districts. It will be thoroughly irresponsible to expect the Tamil people to cast their votes freely in this atmosphere of military rule.

'Indeed there have been so many instances of intimidation of voters by the Police in the recent elections for local bodies. One can imagine what the Police and the Army will do where the Government is interested in getting a verdict for de-linking the two Provinces.

'The TULF urges President Wijetunga not to play with lives of the Tamils and Muslims of the Eastern Province. Let him expend the energy of holding a referendum in working out a solution to the Tamil problem. Far from solving the Tamil problem, the holding of a referendum will further create estrangements and aggravate the problem.

'The TULF is of the considered view that an interim President not directly elected by the people should not initiate measures of far reaching consequences without seeking a mandate from the people.'

Past Copies of Tamil Times

Past copies of Tamil Times are available for sale in 12 volumes, the present series being volume 13. The price of each volume is £20 by surface mail. Those interested are requested to send a cheque/draft/money order for £20 for each volume to:

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Whither Human Rights?

by T. Pathmanathan

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights formulated by the UN in 1948, was born out of the ashes of the 2nd World War – a war where millions died to make the world safe for democracy from the grim, cruel and harsh experiences of Nazi and Fascist repression. It was inspired by two simple words 'Never again'; never again should the world experience war, terror, genocide, the evils of racism; never again should governments inflict terror on its citizens and never again should there be violations of human rights on such a massive scale. It is the purpose of this article to take a closer, more objective look at the progress made in this direction and on some key and crucial issues facing the world human rights movement today.

What are human rights, what are its dimensions, what parameters, if any, circumscribe these two magic words?

Before the 1948 UN Declaration, the vast majority of the people of the world had no codified rights at all; the famous American Bill of Rights (1776) did not embrace the rights of the black slaves of that country; the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) overlooked the rights of women! The first attempt to think of human rights in universal terms was by Franklin D. Roosevelt of the U.S.A., when he envisioned the four essential freedoms in his now famous Address to the Nation in 1941 – 'the right of free speech and free expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear'; it was a broader and more balanced conception of human rights – on a universal scale – than ever before presented. It formed the foundation for the UN Declaration of 1948 and a vast body of international human rights law which has subsequently been developed; eight international Conventions and Treaties now codify the obligations of the UN member states.

How far have these hopes been reached and these treaty obligations been fulfilled, 46 years after the signing of this Declaration? Ethnic cleansing, civil war in a dozen countries of the globe, torture of the most horrendous proportions, arbitrary imprisonment without trial and extra-judicial executions of civilians by governments – an enduring pattern of repression is reported and documented by the largest human rights organisation in the world namely Amnesty International. Its Annual Report 1993 reads like an endless and fatalistic litany – mutilated bodies of torture victims in Mexico, gang raping of girls in India, unarmed men shot by British soldiers in Northern Ireland, ethnic cleansing in the heart of Europe, hundreds of thousands incarcerated in China after the tanks rolled in on Tianenneman Square, thousands slaughtered in British Columbia, indiscriminate killings in the name of religious fundamentalism in the Middle East, merciless killings of unarmed civilians in the name of language, race or religion in Sri Lanka, Sudan, the Philippines, Algiers, Nigeria, Peru, Burma – the list is endless and the global map of human brutality drawn in the pages of the Amnesty International's Report has villains old and new – democracies, dictatorships, presidencies, republics, (parliamentary or otherwise) and the lot!

Soldiers in most of these countries armed and trained by both West and East continue to slaughter or torture victims in a climate of total impunity while the international community watches with apparent disregard or despair or helplessness. Far from progressing towards prosperity, more and more people plunge into poverty, sickness and despair. Even in the richest nation on earth – U.S.A. – mentally retarded persons are gassed or electrocuted (after due process of law of course!) even President Clinton had no qualms in using such judicial execution in his victorious ride to the White House! Even countries which consider themselves to be the cradles of democracy have brazenly aided repressive regimes in their quest for markets for their armaments.

Far from co-operating to stem the rising tide of repression, we see the international community floundering in the face of human rights disasters and remaining as bystanders in every region of the globe as human rights are being rolled back in spite of the spread of democratic institutions in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa. Rightly did Francis Fukuyama predict, intriguingly, 'the end of history.'

While the sad truth of failure in the field of protection of human rights, as commonly understood, can hardly be concealed or swept under the carpet, there is now emerging in the international fora a dilemma in the very concept of human rights. This dichotomy or conflict which was simmering for some time came into sharp focus in

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ROUNDABOUT

THE RUSSIAN HITLER

In today's Russia, there is no one to match the neo–fascist and anti–Semitic outpourings of Mr. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the leader of the ultra–nationalist Liberal Democratic Party in Russia which won the most number of seats in last December's elections to the Russian Parliament with the support of extremist elements who have a strong anti–Semitic tradition. His intemperate and anti–Semitic outbursts during his recent visit to European countries have earned him the name, 'Russian Hitler'. But recent revelations about Zhirinovsky's Jewish roots have greatly embarrassed him and his extreme nationalist rightwing supporters.

Documentary evidence in the form of handwritten public records in the archives at his hometown Alma–Ata in Kazakhstan reveal that Zhirinovsky's actual name is Eidelshtein by which he was known until he was 18. The present Zhirinovsky applied to the authorities in Alma–Ata some thirty years ago in June 1964 to have his name changed to conceal his Jewish roots.

Not surprisingly Mr. Zhirinovsky's close friends have rushed to denounce the documents as having been concocted by the special services of Kazakhstan, maybe on the personal instructions from President Nazarbayev. However, Aijan Kazhigaleyeva, an archivist at the registry office of the Ministry of Justice in Kazhak capital, has asserted to journalists the authenticity of the documents and that an unidentified man, presumably on behalf of Mr. Zhirinovsky, had on three separate occasions offered her substantial sums of money to have the documentary evidence removed.

In spite of the long anti–Semitic tradition in Russia, many of the founding leaders of the former Soviet Union including Lenin and Trotsky had Jewish lineage. But during Stalin's regime, there was an attempt to conceal this fact.

DINOSAUR DISCOVERY

The well preserved remains of a plant–eating dinosaur, the size of a rhino have been unearthed by an amateur fossil collector on the Isle of Wight. Lin Spearpoint who has been collecting fossils for less than a year is believed to have discovered the most complete skeleton yet found of an armadillo–like *Polacanthus*, which measured 12ft long and 5ft tall.

Polacanthus, of which only two partial skeletons exist, lived about 115 million years ago during the Lower Cretaceous period.

Dr. Robin Cocks, head of palaeontology at the Natural History Museum in London, describing the find as 'very interesting' said that the importance of the discovery would depend on the fossil's completeness. The best example, unearthed in 1867 and held by the museum has about half the animal's bones. It is claimed that the find on the Isle of Wight has about 70 per cent of the original creature.

News of the discovery on the Isle of Wight comes as American scientists are claiming to have discovered a fossil trove in the Gobi desert. The Mongolian find made by a team from the American Museum of Natural History, includes some unknown carnivorous dinosaurs, lizards and several dinosaur nests with well preserved eggs. Museum staff claim that it is the best grouping of vertebrates at a single site ever found from the Cretaceous period. Nearly 100 dinosaur fossils and 147 rare mammal skeletons were unearthed over ten days in July 1993.

CONTRACEPTION

In south Asian countries like India and Sri Lanka women had known for decades, even centuries that the eating of unripe papaya would produce the effect of aborting pregnancies. Now a research team from the University of Sussex in England claim that papaya can be an effective contraceptive and powerful enough to abort pregnancies.

The papaya from the tropics contains a strong enzyme called papain which interacts with the hormone progesterone. Progesterone prepares the uterus for pregnancy and is necessary to maintain the developing foetus in the womb. If progesterone and papain interact, the level of progesterone needed to maintain pregnancy can be affected the researchers said.

The researchers seem confident that papaya could become the basis for a new form of contraception in western countries.

CHICKENING OUT

The Austrian government has been accused by literary circles in the country of 'chickening out' from giving a prestigious prize in European literature to Salman Rushdie. The literary and journalistic community has demanded that the award go to Rushdie, but the government maintains that it is not possible.

Interior Minister Franz Loschnack has cited 'extreme security risks' saying that they have not diminished in the five years since the fatwa (death sentence) was imposed by Iran's late spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini on Rushdie on the grounds that his novel 'The Satanic Verses' was blasphemous to Islam. Mr. Loschnack reminds that Iran recently renewed the call for Rushdie's execution on the fifth anniversary of the death decree.

'We are sensitive to the security problems arising from granting such an award. Assuming we invited him and something did happen. You can just imagine what we would have to listen to from all quarters', Loschnack argues. It is said on behalf of the Austrian government that it is not only deeply concerned over the safety of Rushdie, bt also for the Austrians living in Iran who can face problems.

However, Austrian journalists and writers consider the action of their government as 'kowtowing' to Tehran. The Austrian based PEN International rejecting the government's position pointed to the 'courageous response' of French cultural Minister Jacques Toubon who had publicly supported Rushdie. 'Many French people support you in the fight for freedom and tolerance, which is also ours', Mr. Toubon wrote to Rushdie.

VEGETABLE PLASTIC

Canadian researchers have found that broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower can be made to yield a superstrong plastic. When the genes from these vegetables are added to that of rapeseed. they get a seed oil which is high in erucic acid. Ordinary rapeseed oil has 66 per cent erucic acid but when mixed with the genes of vegetables like broccoli this goes up to 90 per cent.

Oils high in erucic acid are known to have over a thousand patented uses. Superstrong plastics and high performance lubricants are just two of them. The tough, nylon–based plastic could be used for making car parts.

BENEFIT OF BEER

Researchers in the Royal Liverpool University Hospital in the UK have provided a scientific excuse for drinking beer. Their study has shown that beer is a good source of the silicon that can be readily absorbed by our bodies. Silicon is an essential element whose main function in the body seems to be to prevent us from absorbing aluminium.

Aluminium is a naturally occurring metal, often found in drinking water, but it is poisonous to humans. Some research has found links between aluminium and certain diseases such as Alzheimer's Disease and kidney failure. The results of such studies are not conclusive however. They have found that no exposure to aluminium is associated with no development of the suspected aluminium–related disease. But although, there is a link between aluminium exposure and the diseases, there is no simple relationship between the amount of exposure and the severity of the diseases.

The researchers at Liverpool point out that since silicon blocks aluminium absorption, it may be necessary to take this into account when studying aluminium–related diseases. The average consumption of beer in the United Kingdom is half a pint a day per head of population but of course many people drink a lot more than this and many drink none. So the

researchers say that any study involving aluminium absorption should take the beer-drinking habits of its subjects into account. (Source: *The Lancet*, 22.1.94).

STRANGERS AND CITIZENS

The UK government's immigration policy neglects the needs of the labour market by erecting unnecessary barriers to entrepreneurs, income–generating overseas students and tourists, according to a report published recently.

The Institute for Public Policy Research suggests that the Government should switch from trying to preserve the status quo by excluding migrants, to having a policy of positive selection of those with the most skills to contribute.

The IPPR's report says that Britain cannot escape the unprecedented mass migration pressures across Europe. 'The dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers which has already taken place is not the only difference from the early 1960s when current immigration policy was adopted. Migration from former commonwealth countries for family reunion, once highly significant is declining while skilled migration for professional and managerial posts has become an area of expansion, not least because of the growth of international companies, many based in the UK', said Sara Spencer who edited the study.

A new refugee strategy is needed – based on the Foreign Office co–ordinating decisions on aid, trade arms deals, debt and foreign policy to avert mass refugee flows. The first step would be for ministers to take a lead in educating opinion to counter racism and xenophobia and to increase awareness of the contribution refugees can make. A new human rights watchdog is needed to bring treatment of refugees in line with international standards – with entry controls based on clear, defensible criteria.

The IPPR does argue that controls are needed on illegal entry of 'economic migrants', but says the present controls are 'disproportionate' to the harm they are intended to address, citing the case of Joy Gardner.

It also warns that a national identity card would mean an expensive and intrusive survey of the population and also that an ID card would not deal with the immigration problems because temporary visitors, whose overstaying causes most concern would not have cards. (*Strangers and Citizens*, IPPR, 30–32 Southamton Street, London WC2E 7RA; £14.95).

WIZKID

'While his classmates sweat it out with numbers, 13 year–old T. Krantikran from Khammam district in Andhra Pradesh in India avidly pursues integration and calculus. It all began two years ago when he startled his family by rattling off the day of many dates in the past and future.

Then he came up with answers to more knotty problems such as the cube root of any number up to one crore and seventy lakh (one billion and 7 million) before you can say Pythagoras. He can memorise up to 40 digits within seconds and recite them in straight or reverse orders. Multiplying and two five-digit numbers takes less than a minute.

Kiran, who has been invited by the US–based Gier Foundation for a three–month study tour to the US admits that there is a method in his wizardry, but refuses to disclose it. 'I want to research further and maybe later I could let the world know the secret'.

JUDICIAL IMMUNITY

The long–standing rule that a judge cannot be sued for misconduct in court has been questioned by a High Court Judge in the UK. Mr. Justice Sedley asks in the London Review of Books: 'Why should judges not be accountable like others if they do unjustifiable harm to people who have come or been brought before them for justice?'

The judge a leading leftwing Queens Counsel before his appointment to the bench two years ago, says: 'Of course there are good reasons for not allowing every disappointed litigant to have a go at the judge; but there are few good reasons for shielding from ordinary civil liability a judge who has deliberately or recklessly abused his or her office and done compensatable harm to an individual.'

In a review of 'Suing Judges A Study of Judicial Immunity' by Abimbola Olowofoyeku the judge says any sane society wants its judges to be independent. But independence need not require immunity from being sued. 'Judges have no authority to act maliciously or corruptly. It would be rational to hold that such acts take them outside their jurisdiction and so do not attract judicial immunity.'

Mr. Sedley accepts that challenges by losers on the grounds of judges' malice could destabilise the legal system. But he describes as 'cogent' the proposal that challenges should be permitted only where the judgment has been quashed by the legal system and chapter and verse can be given for the allegations of judicial misconduct and never for defamation.

Either a special court with a majority of lay members or a judicial ombudsman could judge the judge. 'Neither institution is unthinkable. If there is little work for it, all to the good.

'But would its very existence, the very possibility of challenge to judicial competence which it would bring, compromise the independence of the judiciary? Long-standing legal doctrine says yes; but if there is a topic on which it is Parliament and not the judges who ought to lay down the law surely this is it.'

Mr. Justice Sedley says the real problem is that 'the judiciary comes very largely from a tranche of society whose values, culture and attitudes are homogenous because they are socially and intellectually inbred'.

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the first UN Summit Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993. The ensuing debate on this issue cast doubts on the proper role of Amnesty International itself. Founded in 1961, this world-wide organisation with members in 150 countries and offices in 50 countries – acting under its mandate – monitors, researches and actively campaigns against specific human rights violations in all countries; it focuses strictly on prisoners of conscience viz.

a) It seeks the release of people detained anywhere for their political beliefs or on account of their colour, ethnic origin, religion or language.

b) It works for fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners; it campaigns actively against 'disappearances' and extra-judicial executions.

c) It opposes the death penalty and torture or other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment of ALL prisoners without reservation political or otherwise.

The Vienna Conference addressed itself to the more basic issue – whether an individual can really be a human being if his or her basic needs are not met – these include food, clothing, shelter, education etc. The international community became sharply divided on this fundmental conceptual issue and got enmeshed in the familiar North/South divide. As against the classic definition of human rights as civil and political liberty and the freedom of the individual, Third World governments came up with two counter arguments.

A) That the western world (the North) was guilty of cultural imperialism for imposing its own view of human rights on the rest of the world. This view, with China as its principal protagonist, was based on their experience that collective interest came before individual rights. China had raised its average life expectancy from 36 in 1949 to 75 in 1985 but this was at the price of individual freedom which is the essence of the Western conception of human rights. The Maoist Revolution of 1949 had pulled a society that was a by-word for famine, starvation and poverty into an enviable standard of communal health through its 'barefoot doctors' and also to self-sufficiency in food through the 'Great Leap Forward' in communal agriculture. The argument was irresistible that communal achievements in these vital and basic areas of human needs cannot be had without cultural and political conformity and that collective interests come before individual rights and liberties.

B) The second argument was based on the thesis – otherwise called the 'full-belly thesis' – that the Western world (North) had shown no interest at all in altering the global economic arrangements whch now make it impossible for the Third World (South) to meet their people's basic human needs – the socio-economic needs to which the world community is supposed to be committed. 'What use is freedom to a starving man?', was their slogan; they decried the North's crusade for political and civil liberty while it continued to export economic misery through unfair trading arrangements, *à la* GATT, to the Third World's Poor.

This was also one of the four freedoms namely: freedom from want that Franklin Roosevelt dreamt of in 1941. Which human right is paramount, the freedom from want or the freedom of expression?

The second argument seems to have more substance and credibility when one notes, in the contemporary world, the North's scant concern for the basic needs of the impoverished millions in the South while it pays lip-service and crusades for civil and political rights. Why are these starvation deaths – in Somalia, Ghana, Sudan, Nigeria and even in the poorer regions of India – not on the Human Rights agenda? Is it because according to the West's perception, these are not fundamental human rights and that individual freedom is what matters most? Who sets the agenda which recognises imprisonment for political beliefs as human rights violations but not the slow but sure death by starvation?

Linked to this was the further contention that one should not abide by notions about human rights which are derived from western liberal culture viz: the opposition to the death penalty and the legitimising of homosexuality and lesbianism – in other words, the human right to express one's sexuality!

These socio-economic rights namely food, clothing, shelter and security are supposedly to have equal weight in the UN's own Human Rights Charter but cannot be achieved because of the intransigence of the West to agree to a more equitable restructuring of the world economy. According to their own statistics, the Western world consumes twenty times more of the world's resources in this supposedly free market.

The North argues that the existence of poverty is no excuse for self appointed and brutal dictators to clamp down the most oppressive of regimes on a hapless citizenry and where the slightest sign of dissent is ruthlessly crushed; a country like China with its appalling human rights record and its contempt for democracy and individual liberty cannot be seen as an advocate of human rights! They cannot parley on equal terms on human rights with Indonesia's military rulers who have ruthlessly crushed freedom in East Timor or with likes of Saddham Husseins, Gaddafis and the Serbian President nearer home!

The Northern leaders see democracy and human rights as synonymous and have their own views of 'structural readjustment' *à la* IMF and World Bank brands! The structural adjustment which the Western world wants, aims at re-shaping or moulding these poorer Third World economies to fit the needs of the global market – in other words to trade their way out of poverty. Yet, ironically as it is, the West denies them the very access to those markets and the IMF and World Bank appear unconcerned to bring down those protective trade barriers which the West throws up as 'cordon sanitaire' around them; they are unconcerned with the harsh and painful human price of the so-called process of structural re-adjustment, perhaps because the poor have never been a priority with the votaries of the free market! Even in the corridors of the UN where one hears the most vociferous pronouncements on human rights, the stark fact is that the UN Commission on Human Rights is one of the most under-funded and therefore powerless of all UN agencies. The UN Working Group on Involuntary Disappearances has (you will be shocked!) a staff of two! A voluntary organisation like Amnesty International has a much bigger budget and a staff of over 200!

This apparent dilemma was highlighted by the suave, soft-spoken, yet highly articulate and outspoken Secretary General of Amnesty International, Pierre Sane, at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna where he stated: 'I believe that the individual cannot really be a human being if his basic needs are not met. While Amnesty International can only monitor and campaign against specific violations of human rights in the sphere of civil and political liberty, the inextricable relationship between human rights and economic development cannot be overlooked. Human rights are therefore indivisible. We must therefore re-assert that ALL rights have to be protected as ALL rights are indivisible. We should not allow ourselves to debate the relative merits of stopping torture of political prison-

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SUB CONTINENTAL SCENE

Award for Czech President

Czech President Vaclav Havel received the 1993 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development in a ceremony at the Indian Presidential Palace on 8 February.

'I am moved and deeply honoured ', the 58 year old Havel said on accepting the award from President Shankar Dayal Sharma. 'To me, it is a way of honouring all the citizens of my country, who for years had engaged in non-violent opposition to the totalitarian regime. It is also an honour to every one who ultimately helped overthrow that regime without a drop of blood spilled', the Czech President said adding, 'Without the heritage of Gandhi and his Indian precursors and followers, there would be considerably less hope in the world that there is today.'

The prize carries Rs.2.5 million ($80,000) and a scroll. Previous winners of the Indira Gandhi award were Mikhail Gorbachev, Namibian President Sam Nujoma, and Rajiv Gandhi.

President Mr. Sharma paid high tribute to Mr. Havel, a gifted writer who played a key role in the democracy movement and the 'velvet revolution' which freed his country from totalitarianism. 'We see him as one of the foremost intellectuals of our time and as a man of great courage and conviction. Jailed three times for a period of almost five years, he has journeyed with unflinching faith through darkness to a new dawn', the President said.

Shiv Sena Attack on Journalists

The extremist Shiv Sena leader Mr. Ball Thackeray and other Shiv Sainiks stand charged with rioting, unlawful assembly, assault, use of criminal force, causing hurt and causing disappearance of evidence following incidents on 9 February in which nine journalists were beaten up after they trooped out of a press conference by Mr. Thackeray held at Aurangabad in Maharashtra, North India.

The problem at the press conference started when Mr. Thackeray asked the reporter, Mr. Mustafa Alam, from *Aurangabad Citizens* to leave because of paper misreporting about Sena Chief's activities. When correspondents from other journals protested that it was improper to single out one journalist and ask him to leave after being invited, Mr. Thackeray snapped back. 'I did not send invitations. If I had, I would have asked *Citizens* not to come here because I have no use for you'. Mr. Alam replied that there were three of them present from his paper and he would stay because 'it involves the freedom of the Press'. Mr. Thackeray retorted: 'You better quit. Don't teach me freedom of the Press'.

When the journalists stood their ground and Mr. Alam declined to leave, three Sena men surrounded him and jostled him out of the hall. Mr. Thackeray warned that 'if I read any distortions in any reporting on today's incident here, then I will fight with both my hands'.

As the journalists walked out the scene shifted to the hotel driveway where some Shiv Sainiks commenced attacking the journalists in the course of which Mr. Alam was beaten up till he fell to the ground and was seen bleeding, a photographer had his camera snatched, some journalists were chased around the hotel.

Immediately after these violent incidents, a self–imposed ban by newspapers of news stories on the Shiv Sena and its leaders came into operation, but following the launching of prosecutions against Mr. Thackeray and nine others, the ban has been lifted.

Merger Between Congresses

The chances of a merger between Congress(I) and Congress(S) seem to be closer now than at anytime in the past with the Congress(I) Working Committee's decision on 4 March to hold a plenary session of the party in April to decide on a formal merger between the two parties. The Committee also decided to expel the party president Mr. Sarat Chandra Sinha who did not attend the meeting.

Briefing press after the WC meeting, the party's General Secretary Mr. K.P. Unnikrishnan said that the WC was of the opinion that 'the entire context in which we functioned as a distinct political entity has changed. Therefore, many of us in the Working Committee feel that those who have been in Congress(S) should join the Indian National Congress under the Presidentship of Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao.' The formal decision to dissolve units of the party and the party itself and to merge with the Congress(I) would be taken at the forthcoming plenary session of the party to be convened in the near future.

If the proposed merger takes place, it would not be a united Congress(S) which would merge with Congress(I). The party is already split. Its President Mr. Sinha, who is opposed to the merger, convened his own Working Committee meeting on 21 February at which a decision to suspend Mr. Unnikrishnan from the post of party General Secretary as well as primary membership was taken.

According to Mr. Unnikrishnan, the 21 February WC meeting convened by Mr. Singh was held without the required quorum and attended only by a 'clique of four', and hence 'unconstitutional'. Mr. Singh was invited to the 4 March WC meeting which was duly convened, but he chose to absent himself. The WC had decided to expel Mr. Singh and others who acted 'unconstitutionally', and resolved to revoke Mr. Unnikrishnan's purported removal from office and membership and restored him to all the positions he had held.

Alliance with AIDAMK Rejected

A strongly worded resolution recently adopted by the Congress Party (TNCC[I]) in Tamil Nadu stated that any effort to revive the party's alliance with Jayalalitha's AIADMK would prove suicidal and seriously affect the fortunes of the Congress(I) in Tamil Nadu. Pointing out that no exigency had now arisen to even think about an alliance, the State unit appealed to the party's President Prime Minister Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, not to consider any truck with the AIADMK at this juncture as the political honour and credibility of the Congress(I) would be at stake because of the rampant corruption with which the Jayalalitha administration was involved.

The resolution said that there was total disappointment among the people, because of the rampant corruption, maladministration, misuse of government machinery, deteriorating law and order situation, rise in the prices of commodities and a spurt in tuition fees in colleges. Corruption had percolated down to all levels of administration and 'ministers, MLAs and bureaucrats are only acting as agents of the Chief Minister quite oblivious to their responsibilities'. The judiciary in the State was being threatened, and the Chief Minister was in confrontation with the State Governor 'As he is not acting according to the wishes of the ruling AIADMK'.

Pointing out that the Chief Minister Jayalalitha was now trying to seek an alliance with Congress(I) and court the support of Prime Minister Rao only for the purpose of protecting herself from corruption charges, the resolution urged the Prime Minister to initiate action against the AIADMK administration and the Chief Minister to 'protect the State from looters'. The TNCC(I) also resolved to launch a mass agitation against the 'anti–people policies' of the State government, and to present petitions containing charges of corruption against the Chief Minister and her administration to the Governor, the Prime Minister and the President.

JKLF Leader Arrested

Javed Ahmed Mir, the Acting President of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) that stands for an independent state of Kashmir was recently arrested by the Indian Border Security Force on 12 March. The Front is one of the

groups engaged in armed conflict with Indian security forces, but it is outflanked by pro–Pakistani organisations which adopt the stance that Kashmir should be severed from India and become part of Pakistan.

A founder member of the Front, Javed Mir, was picked up from a car in which he was traelling with a friend on a busy street. He was taken into custody on being pointed out by a detained militant being driven through the streets to identify fellow militants.

With the arrest of the 35-year–old Javed, which is regarded by the security forces as a 'big success', all four top leaders of the JKLF who started the insurgency have either been killed or arrested. Ashfaq Majid Wani and Hamid Sheikh, two top leaders, were killed in encounters with the security forces. 'The arrest will break the backbone of the militant movement in the Valley. Certainly this will have a demoralising effect on the militant factions and their mentors in the Valley and across the border', a senior official claimed.

Having been a student leader from 1974, Javed became an active leader of the Front in 1987 when he was imprisoned on charges of destroying liquor stores in Kashmir. In the Hiranaga prison, he and three others, Alfaq Majid Wani, Abdul Hamid Sheikh and Yasin Malik formed a group and after their release in 1988, went to Pakistan for arms training. But his group did not favour the accession of Pakistan but wanted Kashmir, including Pakistani–occupied Azad Kashmir, to be independent of both India and Pakistan.

Javed was one of the few militant leaders who used to move about in the city, lead processions and address rallies, often without mask, and thereby became the most photographed of the militant leaders. He was the publicity Secretary when the top leadership of the Front, including Malik and Sheikh, were arrested by the BSF in August 1990. Singlehandedly he kept the JKLF together and often withstood the onslaught of the pro–Pakistani militant groups especially the fundamentalist Hizbul Mujahedeen. It was under his leadership that the Front clashed with Hizbul Mujahedeen activists on several occasions and maintained its pro–independent line.

The news of Javed's arrest brought life to a standstill in Srinagar, where the JKLF had a stong following. Shops were shut, commuters rushed back to their homes and streets became deserted. A general strike was called and Front activists fired at several places in protest against the arrest.

Tata Executive Released After Longest Captivity

After 329 days of captivity, Mr. Bolin Bordoloi, a Tata Tea executive, abducted by Bodo militants on 8 April last year, was released on 2 March 1994. The executive's period of captivity has been the longest in Assam and also probably in the whole of the sub–continent.

Mr. Bordoloi was abducted by militants of the Boro Security Force (BdSF), whose stated objective is a 'sovereign Bodoland'. It had demanded from Tata Tea Company a ransom of Rs.15 crores in US dollars for Mr. Bordoloi's release. However, the company made it plain that it would not pay any ransom though it said that it would be ready to invest substantially in development projects in the Bodo inhabited areas. Tata Tea, the largest tea company in the world has 19 tea estates in Assam of which four are in Bodo inhabited areas on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.

Speaking after his release, Mr. Bordoloi said that he had been released by his captors 'on humanitarian grounds', and that no ransom was paid nor was any deal made. Insisting that he was treated well throughout his captivity, he said that he stayed in 97 different houses moving from one to the next at short notice and walking long distances over several days, sometimes wading through chest–high waters, and spending approximately seven months in Bodo villages and about three–and–a–half months in Bodo 'camps'.

Mr. Bordoloi kept fit by playing games, read books and magazines provided by his captors and kept a diary. He had access to newspapers and a radio, and was occasionally able to watch TV.

Senior General Gunned Down

A senior general, who was to take over as the chief of India's military intelligence, was killed with 15 Army personnel in a mysterious blast here last week while inspecting a huge cache of arms seized from terrorists in Kashmir.

The explosion at the high–security field ordinance depot on Srinagar's outskirts on March 29 took place when Maj. Gen. E.W. Fernandes was examining the weaponry during his first trip to the state.

Fernandes, 52, considered a brilliant officer and popularly known as Ferdie, was the most–senior Army officer killed in Kashmir since the bloody campaign by Muslim separatists began.

Grenade as Trigger

An Army spokesman said the others killed included four colonels, three majors and a captain, besides a civilian photographer. Fernandes was to have flown to New Delhi a few hours later to take over as director general of military intelligence.

The explosion, apparently triggered by a grenade, brought down the ordinance building that contained hundreds, possibly thousands, of various kinds of weapons seized from the separatists over the last four years.

Army sources put the number of weapons destroyed in the blast at more than 4,000, including sophisicated rifles, grenades and bombs.

The bodies of the dead were charred and could be identified only by tattered uniforms, while the photographer was identified by film rolls in his shirt pocket.

The spokesman called the explosion 'accidental', but at least two Muslim separatist groups, including the Jamait–ul–Mujahideen and Ikhwan ul–Muslimeen, claimed responsibility.

A Home Ministry official in New Delhi discounted the hand of guerrilla groups, saying the claims were made only to boost their sagging morale. But other Army sources said sabotage could not be ruled out.

Area Sealed Off

Authorities sealed the entire cantonment and barred entry to all non–Army personnel, including journalists and firemen of the civil administration. A large fire triggered by the explosion was brought under control in 90 minutes, the spokesman said.

The bodies were extricated from the rubble after six hours of rescue operations. Six other Army personnel who were injured were taken to a hospital.

Fernandes's body was flown to Pune. He was based in Calcutta until his new posting was announced. He was a brigadier when posted to Sri Lanka after the pact with that country in 1987 in a bid to end Tamil militancy there.

Last year Muslim separatist set off a time bomb in the high–security office of the Kashmir police director general, killing two people, seriously injuring senior officers and leaving police leaders shaken.

CPI Leaders Crossover

LUCKNOW, March 8.

In the salvage operation launched by the senior CPI national leaders to retrieve partly the loss of face sustained by the party, following desertion by senior State leaders including its general secretary, Mr. Mitra Sen Yadav, MLA, the veteran leader and Rajya Sabha member, Dr. Z.A. Ahmed, in a statement reiterated his loyalty to the CPI and denied that he was joining the Samajwadi Party of Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav. But the party leaders' efforts to persuade the others who had taken the decision after talks with Mr. Yadav and his emissary and senior cabinet colleague Mr. Rama Shankar Kaushik did not fructify.

For the CPI a big jolt came the other day when a number of senior party leaders, led by the Mr. Mitra Sen Yadav opted out

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to join the Samajwadi Party. The other senior leader to leave is Mr. Ram Chandra Bux Singh, MLC and former leader of the CPI group in the Assembly. Others are Mr. Guru Prasad and Mr. D.K. Yadav former legislators. While Mr. Mitra Sen Yadav's floor crossing has left the CPI with only two members in the 419 strong Uttar Pradesh Assembly, the lowest ever, it has no representation now in the Upper house. The CPI(M) has a solitary member with none in the legislative council.

The jolt to the CPI is indicative of the caste virus getting better of the ideology at the ground level, which induced these leaders to fall in the line. The backward castes now view Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, as one leader who is capable of delivering goods rather than the left parties with their shrinking base. The more important point is the lesson of the last election, when the BSP made it clear that Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav may concede some seats to the Left parties in adjustment but should set up candidates where he feels the party has a better chance.

AIADMK to Function in Opposition

NEW DELHI, March 16.

The AIADMK Parliamentary Party has decided to function as an Opposition group in Parliament during the current budget session in view of the developments in the last few days culminating in the decision of the Congress(I) to submit a charge–sheet against the Jayalalitha Government.

The Parliamentary Party which met here today is believed to have reviewed the political situation in Tamil Nadu in the light of the continuing barbs from the Congress(I) leaders against the AIADMK Government and come to the conclusion that any co–operation with the Central Government has become untenable.

The party had to formally consider the situation in view of the dialogue between the AIADMK Parliamentary Party leaders and the Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. V.C. Shukla, at the beginning of the budget session of Parliament on floor co–ordination between the two parties.

China Assails India Over Tibet Convention

China criticized India the first time in six years for not having prevented a World Parliament on Tibet that demanded an unconditional dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said in Beijing on March 22 that it 'deeply deplored' the Indian government's failure to scuttle the March 18–20 gathering in Delhi of 35 members of Parliament from 21 countries, besides about 30 MPs from India.

'We strongly condemn the anti–China clamor made at the meeting,' the spokesman said. 'We deeply deplore that such anti–China political activities had not been forestalled on the territory of India.'

The spokesman said the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, which organized the meeting, was 'initiated by a small number of Indian parliamentarians in collusion with the international anti–China force.'

China, he said, had asked India not to allow the weekend conference, the second on Tibet in New Delhi since 1989. The Chinese official reiterated that Beijing has had sovereignty over Tibet for 700 years and that human rights were an internal matter.

The New Delhi gathering denounced what it called China's human rights abuses in Tibet; pressed China to hold unconditional negotiations with the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama; sought observer status at the United Nations for the Dalai Lama's government–in–exile based in the Indian town of Daramsala; and urged the world's governments to extend moral and material support for the cause of Tibetan freedom.

The denunciation by Beijing was its first public criticism of India since the 1986–87 border skirmishes between the two countries. Their relations have been steadily improving since Rajiv Gandhi, who was then Prime Minister, visited Beijing in December 1988.

In New Delhi an official spokesman clarified that there was no government involvement in the conference. 'If private citizens want to hold a seminar, they are free to do so,' he said.

He, however, reiterated that India considered Tibet an autonomous region of China.

The Indian government, according to the organizers, had denied the use of a hall in the heart of Delhi, forcing the conference to shift to the city's outskirts.

No member of the ruling Congress Party attended the convention, and New Delhi prevailed on the Dalai Lama to stay away. Barely 30 Indian MPs out of a total of more than 800 took part.

Foreign delegates to the convention came from Russia, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Canada, Chile, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Germany, Britain, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Norway, Switzerland and Australia.

Indian MPs who took active part or addressed the convention included George Fernandes, Mohan Singh and Syed Shabuddin (all of the Janata Dal Party); T.N. Chaturvedi (Bharatiya Janata Party) and Karma Topeden (Sikkim Sangram Parishad).

A day before the conference opened, the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, R.L. Bhatia, said in Parliament that the meeting could harm Chinese–Indian ties, and he urged the organizers to call off the convention. He added that China had expressed 'displeasure' over the gathering on Tibet.

Former Kashmir Speaker Shot Dead

JAMMU, March 18.

Mr. Wali Mohammad Ittoo, former Speaker of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, was gunned down by militants in broad daylight on one of the busiest streets of this city today.

Bashir Ahmed Padroo, a constable of the Jammu and Kashmir police, has been arrested and identified as the person responsible for gunning down of Wali Mohammed Ittoo.

Police said the militants opened fire with automatic weapons at Mr. Ittoo, a close associate of the National Conference Chief, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, after Friday prayers at the Jamia Masjid. He was killed on the spot. The attackers then fled.

A red alert was sounded in and around the city and the BSF was called out to assist the CRPF and the Jammu and Kashmir Armed Police in the hunt for the killers.

Padroo is stated to be a Pakistan–trained militant and the State police claimed he was the main killer of Ittoo. A resident of village Adijan in Handjipora in Pulwama district in the Valley, Padroo was found by the police during a raid. The man was hiding in police lines here and is being questioned by police.

In the refugee camps here, there was deep mourning as Mr. Ittoo used to visit them regularly and help solve problems.

Besides the Governor, all major political parties such as the National Conference, the Congress(I) the CPI, the CPI(M) and the BJP have condemned the murder of Mr.Ittoo.

Mr. Ittoo had started his career as a teacher after completing his post graduation in law. Later he joined the National Conference and was elected to the Assembly in 1977 from Noorabad constituency in the Kashmir valley. He was re–elected in June, 1983 and was Speaker in 1983–84.

Mr. Ittoo was also nominated as a member of the State Legislative Council and retired as its member last year.

Mr. Ittoo is the tenth former legislator to be killed by militants in the past four years or so. The others are Ghulam Mustafa Mir, Sheikh Abdul Jabbar, Sheikh Mohammad Mansoor, Pir Mohammad Shafi, Ghulam Mustafa Malik. Mohammad Subhan Bhat, Hissamuddin Banday, Ghulam Qadir Wani alias 'Nelora' and his son, Nazir Ahmad Nelora.

The killing of political activists began in August, 1989, when militants gunned down a local National Conference leader, Mohammad Yousuf Halwai, in downtown Srinagar.

The killing of Mr. Ittoo assumes significance as it comes close

on the heels of a statement made by the Union Home Minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan that the Centre would soon start the political process in Kashmir.

Police say that in his preliminary confession during interrogation last night, Padroo admitted that he was an activist of the pro–Pakistan Hizb–ul Mujahideen whose leaders had him recruited as a constable in the Jammu and Kashmir police.

The so called Hizb–ul Mujahideen leaders had assigned him the task of assassinating pro–Indian Kashmiri Muslim leaders who were temporarily settled or residing in Jammu region.

According to Padroo, Ittoo had fled the Valley four years ago when Kashmiri militants began their armed struggle.

Not Even a Greeting

MADRAS, March 16.

For all the suspense and anxiety it was an anticlimax in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

With relations between the Governor, Dr. M. Channa Reddy and the Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha being strained and the ruling AIADMK and the Congress(I) in a mood of confrontation the general expectation was that the occasion of the Governor's address to the House might contribute to an aggravation of the situation.

All the same, the special address under Art. 176 of the Constitution, was as ceremonial and smooth as ever before, only the atmosphere in the House was grim. Neither Dr. Reddy nor Ms. Jayalalitha was inclined to greet each other even once and they conducted themselves as strangers.

Arriving at the Assembly premises at 9-59 a.m. the Governor was conducted to the podium by the Speaker, Mr. R. Muthaiah, in a ceremonial procession. As Dr. Reddy was passing the long line of Ministers no one from the Treasury benches tried to wish him. When he neared the Chief Minister he looked the other way and Ms. Jayalalitha also did not try to communicate with him.

In a business–like fashion Dr. Reddy delivered the address which, except for a few additions and updating, was by and large similar to that delivered by Mr. Bhishma Narain Singh last year.

Whenever 'Dr. J. Jayalalitha' was mentioned – there were nearly a dozen such occasions in the course of the 54 minutes reading of the English speech by the Governor – there was a prolonged thumping of the desk by the ruling party members. Most of the Congress(I) members were listening to the speech quite motionless. There were some wry smiles among some Congress(I) members on a couple of occasions – one of which was scattered desk thumping by the ruling party benches to a single reference to 'Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. MGR Nutritious Noon Meal Programme.'

The Chief Minister, who was closely following the text the Governor was reading, turned towards the podium whenever the Governor faltered while pronouncing the names of places. A special focus lamp beamed down on the podium to make it easier for the Governor to read out the address.

When the Governor finished reading and resumed his seat, the Speaker took the mike to render the speech in Tamil. After the national anthem was played the Governor having fulfilled his constitutional obligation, left the House followed by the Speaker, as all the members were standing. While going out also Dr. Reddy did not turn to the Chief Minister's side and the customary send–off with folded hands was not there.

Chandrika Spells Out Party Policies

Western Province Chief Minister, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge addressed over 200 invitees comprising leading members of Sri Lanka's private sector and diplomatic corps at the Taj Samudra Hotel recently.

She declared her party's commitment to pursue Sri Lanka's open market policies, with the private sector being the major engine of economic growth. The difference was that the new policies would be characterised by transparency openness and accountability, so that opportunities for growth and expansion would be equally available to all members of the private sector, and not limited to cronies with access to the seats of power. Her party was determined to end 'crony capitalism' and create a level playing-field for everyone, with Sri Lanka's development perspectives and priorities being determined in closest consultation with the private sector through deliberative council mechanisms as is the case with dynamic East Asian Economies. There would also be a defined role for the state and public intervention where markets fail to function effectively such as in health, education and social services.

Mrs. Kumaratunga saw Sri Lanka's and her own party's close political links with India as creating the basis for preferential market access arrangements that could be extended to other sub-continental neighbours with all, of whom her party had cordial relations. This would provide the momentum needed for Sri Lanka to attract substantial privte foreign investment, and evolve as a financial services centre serving the entire region. Her party was committed to providing every support needed to ensure these developments, including the provision of the necessary infrastructure through, for example, the privatisation of telecommunications, etc. The climate of ethnic peace needed to underpin this design for rapid development and employment creation would be ensured by the implementation of a package of devolutionary measures acceptable to the minority communities, within a unified, non-Eelamist Sri Lanka.

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ers in jail cells or feeding hungry children. Both must be done.'

The lesson of the Tiannenman massacre in China has made it clearer than ever that we should not have to choose between the two different kinds of human rights, between freedom from want and freedom of expression. What is needed is a new agenda for human rights, not of the Western or Third World variety, each of which is fashioned to suit the needs of their respective ideologies or credos, but based on the four freedoms spelt out by Franklin Roosevelt in 1941 and embodied in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, namely a universal perspective. The sad truth is that even after the passage of nearly 50 years, the world has singularly failed to meet those aspirations or ideals. It reminds of the famous lines of John Milton 'The hungry sheep look up and ar not fed.'

★ 920 HUMAN RIGHTS COURT CASES AGAINST POLICE

A total of 920 cases against various police officers for violation of Fundamental Rights in violation of the Constitution were instituted in the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka during the last five years, states a report to the Ministry of Justice by M.A. Cyril, the Registrar of the Supreme Court.

The report adds that the largest number of cases against police officers were filed in 1992 numbering 605. Each of the 920 cases filed cites at an average three police officers as respondents.

The report states that the Supreme Court was able to hear and determine a total of 1495 applications during the period 1989 to 1993.

Tamil Nadu: Jayalalitha To Go It Alone

by T.N. Gopalan

For the second time in the last twelve months or so, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and AIADMK General Secretary, Jayalalitha has unilaterally severed her party's ties with the Cong-I.

The AIADMK would go it alone not only in the by-elections to Perundurai and Mylopore but also in the general elections two years hence, she declared in the State Assembly on March 21.

'We will prove that we can win all by ourselves. This will put a full stop to the talk that we won in the 1991 elections because of the alliance,' she asserted.

The wheel seems to have come a full circle. It was her contention that the Rajiv assassination had nothing to do whatsoever with the massive victory of the Cong-I-AIADMK front in the last elections which marked the turning point in the relationship between the two. 'She has belittled the supreme sacrifice of Rajiv,' screamed everyone in the Cong-I including TNCC-I President Vazhapadi K. Ramamurthy who was then an unabashed and unrepentant supporter of Ms. Jayalalitha.

While many other factors, including Dr. Subramaniam Swamy's campaign against her – which he was apparently waging with the blessings of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao himself – had resulted in the deterioration in the relationship, Ms. Jayalalitha's forementioned declaration in a party conference in June 1992 did mark a watershed.

Subsequently the carpings from the state Cong-I intensified. Enraged at Mr. Rao's silence in the face of such provocations despite repeated appeals from her, Ms. Jayalalitha announced early last year that the alliance stood severed.

Her party did triumph in the two by-elections held thereafter, one for the Lok Sabha and another for the Assembly. The major parties, the DMK, the AIADMK and the Cong-I had all contested on their own, and the AIADMK's victory seemed to prove her hold on the electorate.

But there there was a hitch. The victory margin had been rather narrow, and the voting pattern clearly showed that if the DMK and the Cong-I came together again, the AIADMK would bite the dust.

Further there were talks of dismissal of her government in the air, or perhaps Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan could uphold the disqualification plea against her and thus the state could be plunged into another round of elections, it was felt. A DMK-Cong-I front could spell disaster for her and her own supporters might rat on her was another theory doing the rounds.

Alarmed at such a development and almost kicking herself for precipitating matters, Ms. Jayalalitha quietly started a fence-mending operation. But then she failed to take into account Mr. Vazhapadi Ramamurthy's capacity to outmanoeuvre her.

Barely a fortnight earlier the AIADMK MPs had met Mr. Narasimha Rao and offered to support his government if only he could rein in the recalcitrant state unit.

As soon as the news of the meeting between Mr. Rao and the MPs was out, Mr. Ramamurthy swung into action, met with his rival Mr. G. Karuppiah Moopanar in Congress-I – there has been a patch-up of sorts between them of late – and together they decided to torpedo the move and thus send a clear signal to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister – there was no way she could revive the alliance without placating them in the first instance was the message.

The Cong-I MPs from the state passed a resolution denouncing any move to renew truck with an 'increasingly unpopular CM'. The state body also followed suit, and there were statements galore coming down strongly on the corrupt Jaya regime.

Union Minister K.V. Thangabalu, the only person apart from Rajiv aide Mani Shankara Iyer MP, to press the PM to bend backwards in order to mollify the annoyed lady, found it prudent to keep a low profile in the face of the wrath of the rank-and-file.

Mr. Rao also did not feel like pushing the state unit too far – after all they were only demanding that the Chief Minister be less off-putting, more reasonable and more respectful when it comes to dealing with them and not treat them as door-mats just as she is doing in the case of the 'leaders' of her own party. Putting the ties on a more even keel could even work to the party's advantage when it comes to seat-sharing, for that matter the very image of the Congress could go up in the people's eyes, Mr. Rao seemed to have realised and chose to bide his time.

Though secure in power for now, Mr. Rao will have to face general elections in two years from now. The Cong-I's prospects in the Assembly elections in some major states, only seven months away, are not very bright. In the circumstances, Mr. Rao would like to sew up an alliance with the AIADMK so that the Cong-I could be assured of a major chunk of the seats at stake in a state like Tamil Nadu – 40 in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry put together – in the 1996 General elections, a matter of life and death to the ruling party. He has his compulsions then.

There are indeed at least two obstacles in the way – one Ms. Jayalalitha has so completely antagonised the state Congress by her intolerably arrogant behaviour that the leaders here would seem to prefer political wilderness rather than playing the role of the Fool in Her Majesty's Court; for another, Mr. Rao does not enjoy the kind of authority wielded by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi or his mother to make the regional satraps fall in line at the flick of his whip. And hence he can only hasten slowly.

But then Ms. Jayalalitha is an impatient politician and, as rightly calculated by Mr. Ramamurthy, irritated by the silence and helplessness of Mr. Rao, she has now said 'Enough is enough'.

Still the last word may not have been said on this matter, as yet, given the political compulsions of both Mr. Rao and Ms. Jayalalitha. One could still expect some peace moves in the not too distant future. But such a prospect apart, Ms. Jayalalitha's declaration snapping the ties opens up new possibilities in Tamil Nadu.

If the rupture is final, the Cong-I could be trusted to sound the DMK for an alliance. With Vai.Gopalasamy out of the picture, the Cong-I would have less qualms over such a move – the Tiger supporter is gone, so what is the harm would be the new refrain.

Mr. Karunanidhi too might welcome such a prospect. After all he was unjustly thrown out of power, when he had completed hardly two years in office, thanks to the machinations of the Cong-I. And coming back to power with that very same party's support would be rendering justice to him.

Only his communist allies might desert him in such an eventuality, but he would not mind, given their limited base in the state. Would they then rally around Ms. Jayalalitha in the name of anti-Congressism? That is a moot point.

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● KASHMIR: A Sensible Approach Needed

by T.N. Gopalan

And so Pakistan has met with its diplomatic Waterloo. By 'unconditionally' withdrawing the resolution on Kashmir it had tabled before the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (HRC), Pakistan has unwittingly demonstrated that it has little or no support in the international community for its attempts to crucify India on the Kashmir issue.

Or at least that is how the Indian government and its loyal media would like to interpret the recent developments in the Geneva session of the HRC. Anyone scanning the news despatches on Kashmir in the Indian press in the recent past might find it difficult to believe that Kashmir is a place which is 'free, democratic and vibrant'. The liberal–minded could be appalled by the jingoistic outbursts in the Indian newspapers and magazines.

Kashmir remains on top of Pakistan's agenda. Predictably so. Any weak, inefficient and corrupt government would naturally find it easier to focus the attention of its people on such emotive issues than to tackle the problems afflicting them. The Benazir Bhutto regime is no exception to this general rule. And for its part, India has been doing whatever it could to further complicate matters and alienate the Kashmiris, only inviting international odium in the process.

The irony of the situation did not seem to be dawning on the Indian commentators who were gloating over the discomfiture of Pakistan. Iran with whose help Pakistan's silence was bought was the only country to be censured by the HRC for human rights violations!

And China, the other country to back India, has been similarly arraigned by the international community on various occasions, even if not at the HRC itself. What a company to keep for the largest democracy in the world.! And none seemed to be alert to the danger to the rest of the polity when one condones the type of repression let loose in Kashmir.

What is happening in Kashmir itself? On the streets, the exchange of gunfire between the paramilitary forces and militants continues unabated. The people remain alienated. A senior military official is quoted as saying, 'Despite the fact that some people are getting restless with continuing militancy, we are not getting information from the public.' Anyway being anti–militant does not have to mean being pro–India. With virtually no political initiative in its mind at the moment, the proverbially indecisive Narasimha Rao regime can only watch helplessly things drifting away, except of course for some cosmetic changes on the human rights front, like enforcing some norms on the army operations in the valley.

Incidentally the HRC did pass a resolution denouncing terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, threatening as they do the territorial integrity and security of States, undermining pluralistic civil societies and so on. But that was no endorsement of the Indian position on Kashmir. As evidenced by home–truths delivered by that much–hated US official, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, only a couple of days later during a Congressional hearing. Continuing to dispute the accession of the state to India she noted that militancy there was 'self–sustaining' and wanted India and Kashmir to sort out the issue among themselves, of course taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiris in the process.

No doubt that such statements, as in the case with the Pak propaganda in Geneva and elsewhere, might further fuel militancy. But a lasting solution calls for some hard soul–searching on the part of India and not some meaningless diplomatic manouevres. Prime Minister Narasimha has said during his visit to the United Kingdom that India was prepared for a dialogue with Pakistan despite the latter's provocative attitude. Why not a similar approach to the militants themselves?

As if to underscore the grim realities in the valley, Mr. Wali Mohammed Ittoo, former Speaker of the J & K Assembly was gunned down in broad daylight on March 18, even as he was coming out of a mosque in Jammu after the Friday prayers.

Mr.Ittoo, the tenth legislator to be assassinated in the last four years or so, was a close associate of Dr. Farooq Abdullah and had been involved in the efforts to revive the political process. The Hizbul Mujahideen, the pro–Pakistani militant outfit, has claimed responsibility and warned anyone colluding with the Indian government would be dealt with similarly.

The arrest of Mr. Javed Mir, a leading light of the more independent Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, a week earlier, admittedly accidentally thus dealing a severe blow to the secular forces, has further complicated mattters.

The options before Rao might be limited, but none could dispute the dire need to win over the Kashmiris through some sensible measures as a way out of the mess.

F-16s For Pakistan

Meantime the US seems to have raised more hackles in India with its proposal to sell 71 F-16 Deep Penetration Strike Aircraft (DPSA) to Pakistan, making a one-time exception to the non-proliferation law.

As per the Pressler amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act dating back to mid-eighties, the US cannot extend military or economic assistance to Pakistan without a certificate from the US President that the latter does not possess a nuclear weapon device. For the last two years such a certificate has not been forthcoming from the White House, but the Clinton administration is exploring the possibility of a waiver for now from the Congress. Apparently the idea is to induce Pakistan to agree to a formal 'verifi-

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What is more probable is that if a Cong-I-DMK alliance does come about, PMK and the Vai.Go faction might be willing to enter into a pact with the AIADMK.

The two by-elections are slated for April 26. Even if nothing concrete takes shape in the matter of alliance, and all the parties contest on their own, there would definitely be pointers to the future. The respective stances of the parties would reveal which way they are headed.

Especially for Mr. Vai.Go the by-elections are crucial, and he will have to prove that he could walk away at least with a considerable portion of the DMK vote-bank if he wants to become a significant political force.

For the record both the seats were held by the AIADMK. Observers do not rule out an encore if the anti-AIADMK votes are fragmented.

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able cap' over its nuclear weapon programme. Ironically then, an anti-proliferation law is being sidestepped only to further the very same objective through a different route. At a later date India too would find its arm twisted in a similar way towards the same goal of 'nuclear disarmament', of course, only in the developing world which has not attained 'sufficient maturity' and which cannot be trusted with 'sufficient discretion' in such sensitive matters like nuclear weapons.

However, Mr. Larry Pressler, the Republican Senator who had initiated the amendment in the first place, has exposed the more pragmatic, rather crass, commercial aspect of the deal – the Clinton regime is buckling down under pressure from the Lockhead Corporation, the F-16 manufacturers. Pakistan is reportedly considering the purchase of jet fighters from alternative suppliers like France if the US does not fulfil its contractual obligations. After all Pakistan has been making regular payments towards the purchase of the aircraft in the hope that the delivery should be coming through sometime.

The US is only trying to encourage Pakistan to use its nuclear weapons against India, New Delhi is charging. For the F-16 can deliver nuclear pay-load deep into the enemy territory, and with the addition of 71 more DPSAs, Pakistan's tally would be double that of India's.

No less a person than the External Affairs Minister Mr. Dinesh Singh has sounded his apprehension to the effect that perhaps the US is keen on an independent Kashmir which it can hegemonise with a view to using it as a possible base for spreading and intensifying its influence in the region covering Central Asia, China, parts of southwest Asia and south Asia.

Pakistan, too, should welcome such a prospect, reconcile itself to an independent Kashmir since it would mean, in effect, a vivisection of India. The sub-continental scene is indeed hotting up.

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India's Political Stake in Sri Lanka

by J.N. Dixit

So Dr. Ariyaratne of the Sarvodayha Movement in Sri Lanka went to Jaffna in late January/early February and brought back a taped message from a second ranking leader of the LTTE, Kalukaran? A message reportedly expressing the LTTE's willingness to negotiate with the Sri Lankan Government.

Meanwhile the cycle of violence continues with rising and falling intensity depending on the situation on the ground. Compounding this is the ambiguous attitude of the Sri Lankan Government on the one hand in dealing with the Tamils' aspirations and the LTTE's determination to stand by its aspirations through all possible means on the other.

How is India reacting to these developments? Analysing recent events, Indian reactions can be compartmentalised into three time-frames. From 1983 to 1987 India was an active, even intrusive mediator. Its efforts culminated in the Indo–Sri Lankan Agreement of 1987 and the induction of the IPKF under separate letters exchanged between the then President Jayewardene and late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

From 1987 to 1990 India became an accidental, and one must acknowledge, as events developed, unacceptable manager of Sri Lankan politics in the larger sense of the term. In 1990 the Government of V.P. Singh took surgical action to disengage India from the Sri Lankan situation and from March 1990, when the IPKF withdrew, to date, India remains a detached but interested observer.

There have been qualitative changes in the Sri Lankan situation. First let us look at the trends in Tamil politics. While the EPRLF and the TULF continue their tenuous efforts to be participants in mainstream democratic activities, they remain irrelevant to the basic Tamil predicament as the aspirations remain unfulfilled. There are no responsive signals from the Sri Lankan Government to them in a substantial manner. The overarching reality is that since the violent elimination of the top leadership of the TULF and the EPRLF between 1989 and 1990, the LTTE has consolidated its political position and hold over Tamil politics in the North and East.

Whatever one's critical reactions to the LTTE leader Prabhakaran and aversion to his intensely violent and combative approach, he has transformed himself from being a leader of a guerrilla separatist force, to a folk hero. Whether his influence over the Sri Lankan Tamil psyche is based on popularity or fear is only an academic exercise. The military competence and effectiveness of the LTTE have been sustained.

The Sinhalese predicament is no different. Premadasa's strong populist leadership supported by the ruthless measures taken by the late deputy Minister for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne, subdued and eliminated the extremist Sinhalese politico–military JVP groups; but from 1991 onwards, party politics in Sri Lanka has been going through a process of disintegration and realignment.

Premadasa's death has led to further factional tensions which prevent the UNP from giving any decisive lead to public opinion in resolving the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka. The submerged factionalism of the SLFP originating in the ideological and sibling rivalry between Chandrika Kumaranatunga, and Anura Bandaranaike has come out in the open.

Though India remains detached, it cannot neglect these trends and developments. There are large numbers of Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu. There are fairly reliable reports of LTTE continuing its activities in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and parts of Kerala. The LTTE still uses parts of India as a base for logistical support. This in turn attracts punitive action and reprisals from the Sri Lankan military and naval authorities. Had this process been a limited conflict between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE, as protagonists, the impact on India would not be immediate and tangible. This is not the case.

President Wijetunga seems to be reassuming the stance which the Sri

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BBC Expands South Asia Report

The BBC World Service's daily radio current affairs programme *South Asia Report* – which covers developments in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, – is doubling its output from the current 15 minutes to half an hour from Monday, April 4.

'The extra airtime will allow *South Asia Report* to become more comprehensive in its coverage of the region,' says Alexander Thomson, *South Asia Report's* Editor. 'In addition to political issues, it will devote more time to stories on business, development and the environment. There will also be coverage of sport and the arts.

'The expansion of *South Asia Report* at this particular time shows the commitment of the BBC to developing coverage of a region of immense political, economic and strategic importance; a region currently going through a period of exciting and fundamental change.'

The expansion means that over the last two years *South Asia Report's* airtime has expanded by more than 300 per cent.

The *South Asia Report* team has recently been strengthened by new recruits who include the BBC's former Delhi correspondent, Sam Miller; Assam-born Rita Borgohain-Paine – a former duty editor in the BBC newsroom; Vijay Rana, a senior producer from the BBC's Hindi Service; and Martin Howe, whose experience as a journalist includes a stint as a television reporter and assignments in Pakistan. The team's resident expert on Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia is Solmaz Dabiri.

Members of the South Asia Report Team, from left: Tinku Ray, Sam Miller, Pam Milner, Alexander Thomson, Rita Payne, Martin Howe and Charu Shahane.

William Crawley, Head of the BBC's Eastern Service said: 'While the impact of satellite television in South Asia has been dramatic, radio continues to have its own great strengths, and BBC World Service Radio will aim increasingly to cater for the special interests of audiences in the region. The expansion of *South Asia Report* will help meet this aim. I am confident that it will increase the programme's appeal.'

★ The morning edition of *South Asia Report* will not go out at 0130 GMT.

The evening edition of *South Asia Report* will now be broadcast at 1645 GMT. The special additional, edition of *South Asia Report* for Nepal and North India will remain at 15 minutes duration and will continue to be broadcast at 1745 GMT.

South Asia Report can be heard every day at the following local times and wavelengths:

PAKISTAN: *2145-2215 on 5975, 9580, 11750 and 15310 kHz in the 49, 31, 25 and 19 metre bands, 1413 kHz – 212 metres medium wave (from 2200)*
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INDIA: *2215-2245 on 5975, 9580, 11750 and 15310 kHz in the 49, 31, 25 and 19 metre bands, 1413 kHz – 212 metres medium wave (from 2230)*
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0700-0730 on 5965, 7160, 9580 and 11955 kHz in the 49, 41, 31 and 25 metre bands.

NEPAL: *2230-2300 on 5975, 9580, 11750 and 15310 kHz in the 49, 31, 25 and 19 metre bands, 1413 kHz – 212 metres medium wave (from 2245)*
2330-2345 on 576 and 792 kHz – 521 and 379 metres medium wave
0730-0745 on 5965, 7160, 9580 and 11955 kHz in the 49, 41, 31, and 25 metre bands.

BANGLADESH: *2245-2315 on 5975, 9850, 11750 and 15310 kHz in the 49, 31, 25 and 19 metre bands, 1413 kHz – 212 metres medium wave (from 2300)*
0730-0800 on 5965, 7160, 9508 and 11955 kHz in the 49, 41, 31 and 25 metre bands.

SINGAPORE: *0930-1000 on 88.9 FM.*

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Lankan Government had between 1983 and 1986 of giving lip service to the need for a political solution while in substantive policy assuming an assertive military and political stance against the Tamils. There is a repetition of the cliche of a 'two track policy' which most governments often articulate in such a situation and try vainly to implement. One track is to take decisive military action against the Tamil opposition, the second track being that as the first option succeeds the pressure will make the Opposition willing for a compromise. This approach is not likely to succeed.

Despite all the criticisms levelled against the 1987 Agreement between Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene, it provides the terms of reference to reform Sri Lankan polity in a manner where the island's unity will be ensured as a plural, democratic, multi–ethnic, multi–lingual, and multi–religious society. There should not be any doubt in any quarter that India has a commitment to this objective because the only alternative would be a fragmentation of Sri Lanka which is not good either for Sri Lanka or for India. Separatism based on religion or ethnicity affects India's own interests; if India accepts the validity of this argument in relation to other countries then it cannot be questioned if applied to the Indian Republic itself.

India's endeavour therefore should be to continue to persuade Sri Lankan authorities to give a fair deal to their Tamil citizens. Meanwhile, India should convey to the Tamils that while committed to their aspirations it urges Tamil public opinion to generate political trends, which would initially abate and ultimately abjure violence and terrorism. Contacts with the Tamil population, even the LTTE, would have to be re-established to bring them back to the path of reason and negotiations.

(The Hindu).

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Jaffna Hindu *seeks qualified groom for niece, 28, graduate teacher in good employment in London. Send horoscope, details. M 733 c/o Tamil Times.*

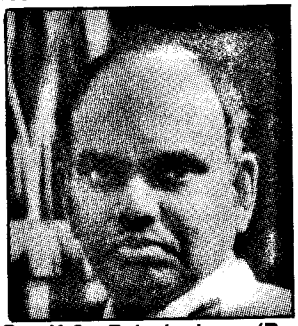
WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couple on their recent wedding.

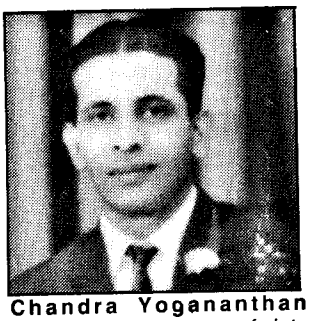
Murali *son of Mr. P.U. Mahalingam, Retired Depot Superintendent, SLCTB and Mrs. Mahalingam of Palaly Road, Kondavil, Sri Lanka and* **Rahini** *daughter of Mr. Sivalingam, Ayurvedic Physician and Mrs. Sivalingam of 7 Main Street, Allukkai, Alaveddy, Sri Lanka on 27.3.94 at Norbury Manor High School Hall, Thornton Heath, Surrey.*

OBITUARIES

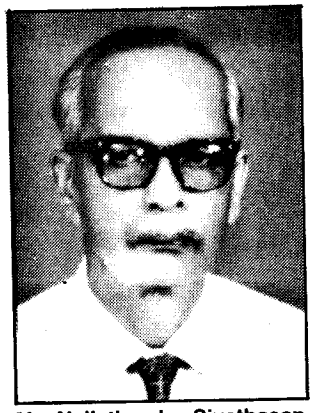
Mr. Chandrasegaran Balachandran, *formerly of C.T.B., Sri Lanka and latterly of Lucas Electrical Products, London; beloved brother of Kandasamy (Australia), Balasunderan (USA), Balakrishnan (Australia), Balendran (Canada), Balaganeshan (Australia), Sivahamasunthery Kumaraguru (Canada), Indrani Supramanyam (Canada) and Kamalasani Panchamirtham (USA) passed away in England on 5th March 1994.*



Dr. K.C. Rajasingham (Rajan), *Lecturer in Mycology, Department of Oral Medicine and Pathology, Guys Hospital, London SE1; only son of the late Dr. Kanapathypillai Cathiravelu and Mrs. Ponnaparanam Cathiravelu of Manipay, Sri Lanka; brother of Mrs. Thangamani Sangarapillai (Canada) and Dr. (Mrs.) Thilapathy Sinnathamby (Singapore); beloved husband of Kreema; loving father of Rohan (Dental Surgeon) and Sheraz (Brunel University reading Law) passed away on 11.3.94 at Harefield Hospital and was cremated at North East Surrey Crematorium on 19.3.94 – 12 Cotsford Avenue, New Malden, Surrey.*



Chandra Yogananthan Duraisingham, *son of late Vetharaniam Sangarapillai Duraisingham (Broker & Commission Agent), Vetharaniam Walawu, Chunnakam (resident Colombo and Kankesanturai) and Devaratnam Duraisingham nee Chittambalam (Tellipallai & Mylíddy); brother of Mrs. Padma Duraisingham Thiruchelvam and Dr. Jeyasingham C. Duraisingham; brother-in-law of late Chinniah Thiruchelvam of Tellipallai (resident Negombo & UK) and Mrs. Leelawathy Duraisingham; old boy of Jaffna Central College and St. Thomas College, Gurutalawe and Mt. Lavinia and of Shell Company, Blue Lagoon Travel & Tours (Vingressor) and American Lloyd (Colombo) passed away on 4.4.93. A Service of Thanksgiving for his life will be held on 23.4.94 at 4 p.m. at Rivercourt Methodist Church, King Street, Hammersmith, London W6 – 26 B Chesterfield Road, London W4 3HG. Tel: 081 742 1139/423 7780.*



Mr. Nallathamby Sivathasan, *beloved husband of late Rasamany; loving father of Sivamani Sivadevi (UK), and Sivanesan (USA); father-in-law of E. Pararajasingham (Ministry of Textiles, Sri Lanka), Dr. S. Sivathasan (UK) and Sunthari (USA); grandfather of Bhamini, Aravindan, Kuhan, Nirupa, Vathana, Priya and Harry expired on 7.3.94. Funeral took place at Kanatte Crematorium, Colombo on 8.3.94 – 303 Hempstead Road, Hemstead, Kent, ME7 3QJ, U.K.*

Called to Glory

Mary Rose Richards *nee Thambiah of Serendeepam Sithankerny, North Sri Lanka on 15 March 1994. Her remains were interred at the JDCSI Cathedral Church Garden of Remembrance on 17.3.94.*

She leaves behind her sons Karunairajan and Christy; daughter-in-law Indira; grand children Gowri and Remy Machado, Damayanti and Lakis Tsiakkas, and Michelle (USA) and great-grand-children Eleni (Cyprus) and Danielle Saranya (Canada) and a host of cousins, nieces, nephews and friends to bemoan her loss. Intimation from Apt. 210, 30 Livonia Place, Scarborough, Ontario M1E 4W7, Canada. Tel: 416 281 1651.

Mrs. Dhanalakshmi Gananathalingam *beloved wife of Gananathalingam (Deputy Director of Customs, Sri Lanka), daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ramachandra; loving sister of Dr. Pararajasegaram (Consultant Eye Surgeon, W.H.O., Geneva), Sundaralingam (former senior D.I.G. Sri Lanka Police, Interpol, Lyon), Balasubramaniam (former Consultant, Ove Arup Partnership, UK), Bhuvaneswary and of the late Parameswary and Shanmugalingam passed away peacefully in Colombo on 29th March 1994.*

She was closely associated with the Ramakrishna Mission and dedicated her music talents to its organisation and other charities – 71/1 Dharmapala Mawatha, Colombo 7.

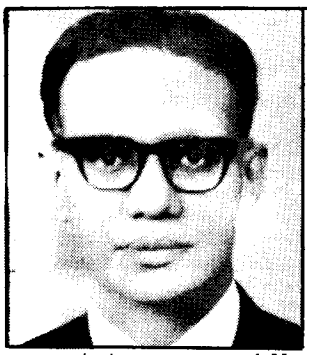
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mrs. A. Subramaniam, her children and other members of the family sincerely thank all old students, friends and relatives who attended the funeral of the **late Mr. C. Subramaniam (Orator),** *sent flowers and messages of sympathy, assisted in the arrangements for the funeral, attended the Athma Shanthi poojah and the meetings in his*

memory in Canada, Colombo and Skanda Varodaya College. They regret their inability to thank all of them individually. – 101 Thamesdale, London Colney, St Albans, Herts. AL2 1TB. Tel: 0727 823 871.

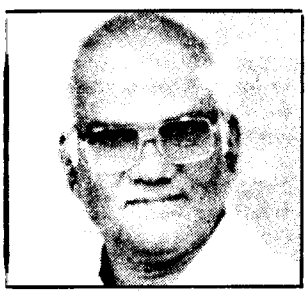
Mrs. L. Ilankanathan, Mr. & Mrs. Kuharajah and all members of the family of the **late Mr. S. Ilankanathan,** *sincerely thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent flowers and messages of sympathy, assisted in the funeral arrangements and attended the poojah held in his memory at Highgate Murugan Temple, London. They regret their inability to thank them individually. – 58 Ringwood, South Bretton, Peterborough PE3 9SH. Tel: 0733 262 760.*

IN MEMORIAM



In everloving memory of **Mr. Velupillai Nadarajah,** *formerly Director, Ceylon School of Social Work, son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Velupillai of Chetty Street, Nallur, Sri Lanka, son-in-law of the late Mr. K. Muthulingam and Mrs. Muthulingam of Tellipallai, Sri Lanka, on the third anniversary of his passing away on 4.4.94.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Muthu Ambikai; daughter Dr. Sakunthala; son Dr. Ravindran; son-in-law Dr. Suresh Thayalan; daughter-in-law Meera; grand-children Arjun, Nisha and Satha – 11 Baronia Croft, Highwoods, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5EF.



In everloving memory of **Mr. Kathiravelu Paramanathan,** *Businessman, Ward No. 1, Pungudutivu, Sri Lanka on the third anniversary of his passing away in Canada on 25.4.91.*

Sorrowfully remembered by his beloved wife Neelambal; children Chandrakumar (U.K.), Sooriyakumar (Canada), Vasuki (U.K.), Indrakumar, Jeyakumar, Nandakumar and Premini (all of Canada); son-in-law Balasubramaniam (U.K.), daughters-in-law Vasanthakala (U.K.), Louisa and Komathi (both of Canada); grandchildren Ryan, Ratheepan, Ravin, Jinesh, Rajeevan and Dilan – 6 Kumars, 285 High Street North, Manor Park, London E12 6SL. Tel: 081 471 5742.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

April 30 *7.00pm* **Vijayanarthanalaya** *presents* **Festival of Dances** *in aid of Lewisham Mayor's Fund in aid of* **Laser Unit for Jaffna Hospital** *at Goldsmith College Great Hall, Lewisham Way, London SE 14. Tel: 081 464 3087/471 2039.*

May 4 *Feast of Beatified Martyrs of England and Wales.*

May 6 *Eekathasi.*

May 7 *6.30pm Jaffna Hindu College OBA (UK) presents* **'Cultural Night'** *at Waltham Forest Assembly Hall, Forest Road, London E17. Tel: 04624 35425, 081 531 0818.*

May 8 *Prathosam.*

May 10 *Amavasai.*

May 12 *Feast of the Ascension of Lord Jesus.*

May 14 *Chathurthi.*

May 21 *Eekathasi.*

May 22 *Pentecost Sunday.*

May 24 *Full Moon & Vaikasi Visakam.*

May 29 *Holy Trinity Sunday.*

May 30 *Feast of St. Joan of Arc & St. Ferdinand, Patron Saint of Civil Engineers.*

At the Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 071-381 3086/ 4608.

May 1st *6.30pm* **Kathak** *by* **Gauri Tripathy** *from India.*

May 14 *7.00pm* **Hindustani Vocal** *by* **Acharya Goswami Gokulotsavji Maharaj** *from India.*

May 29 *6.30pm* **Sitar & Indian Guitar** *by Indrajit Banerjee & Barun Kumar Pal from India.*

Gita Lectures *by* **Sri Mathoor Krishnamurti** *at 5.30pm on* **May 7, 14, 21 and 28.**

Dr. K.C. Rajasingham – An Appreciation

'Service is a lifetime programme, it knows no rest or respite. This body has been given to you so that you may devote its strength and skills to the service of Brother Man.'

– Sathia Sai Baba –

Dr. K.C. Rajasingham fondly known as Rajan, hails from the village of Manipay, in Sri Lanka. He lost his father when he was fourteen and was cared for by his mother and two sisters. He had his early education at Jaffna Central College, and was very proud of his school. He was the first Queen Scout of Sri Lanka, and had the privilege of presenting a message to Queen Elizabeth the second when she visited Ceylon in 1953 soon after her coronation. He moved to Colombo for his 'A' Level studies and enrolled himself at Aquinas College, and then for a short period was a teacher and sports master at Zahira College, Colombo.

In 1959 he came to UK to complete his degree course in Biological Science. He obtained a Two/One BSc honours degree from Queen Mary's College. His journalistic talent was spotted by the Times of Ceylon Editor who invited him to be their London correspondent. He had interviewed many famous people in various walks of life including politicians. In the early sixties he used to organise Tamil, Hindi and Sinhala film shows at the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington for the benefit of the expatriates from Ceylon and South India. He also ran a travel agency and at Christmas time arranged charter flights for the expatriates to visit their homes.

He joined Guy's Dental School in 1966 as a Research Assistant in the Department of Oral Medicine and Pathology working with Dr. Rod Cawson. His research was supported and funded by Wellcome Trust. Dr. Cawson became Professor Cawson, a well known international figure in Oral Medicine and Pathology. Rajan has written many scientific papers with Professor Cawson. In 1974 Rajan was awarded M.Phil for his work in mycology. His special interest was on Candida. This work was undertaken with Electron Microscope (EM). He became an expert with EM work and was in charge of this unit. Many Postgraduate students local and foreign benefited from his advice and expertise in the use of EM for their research.

In September 1986 he fell seriously ill with myocardial weakness. A few years previously he was struck by a viral infection which caused myocarditis. He had only one choice, that was to have a heart transplant. Rajan was not convinced. He told me how he was given the picture of Sri Sathia Sai Baba and holyash by his friend who worked at Guy's Pharmacy. One night around 4am Rajan felt that someone thumped on the left side of his chest and pulled out his weak heart and then patted and said to him you have some unfinished work to carry on. Rajan became an ardent devotee of Sri Sathia Sai Baba. He rarely missed the bajans at the Sai Centre at Wimbledon on Thursdays and Sundays.

Rajan came back to work in May 1987 with a new heart and renewed enthusiasm for more scientific research and obtained his Ph.D. His work on Candida is well recognised internationally and has been quoted in text books. He was awarded the Fellowship of the Institute of Biology, and was very proud of this prestigious qualification. He was the only person holding this at that time, Professor Poswillo being the other in the Dental School at Guy's but he retired in 1992. Rajan had many remarkable achievements in this eight year lease of his life, returning to give freely once more of his time and energy to many of his former interests. He had very actively participated in the activities of Jaffna Central College OBA, MIOT, and many social interests of Sri Lankans. His journalistic talent was put to use to present the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Rajan no doubt, was a multi talented person. He goes out of his way to help any one whether known for many years or just introduced to him. Recently while he was a patient at Harefield Hospital he telephoned a friend asking for a favour to help another who had some financial difficulties. Though in sadness we salute his passing away it is with affection and gratitude that we remember him and express our sympathy to his family.

V. Rajayogeswaran.

New BBC Reporter in Colombo

The new BBC reporter in Colombo is **George Arney,** *who has reported for the World Service for the past 12 years. He joined the BBC World Service as a producer in the Eastern Topical Unit in 1982. In 1986 he went to Islamabad for two years as the BBC correspondent, during which time he wrote a book about Afghanistan and also wrote for 'The Guardian'. He returned to London in 1988 as a senior current affairs producer. George spent six months as the acting Head of the Urdu Service in 1991 and the following year joined 'South Asia Report' as a presenter and producer, which included live election coverage from Pakistan during the 1993 polls. He has a first class degree from Cambridge and an MA in South Asia Area Studies the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.*

World Tamil Television

Urban Str.31, 10987 Berlin,
Tel: (030) 6913858, 6917256
Fax: (030) 6943384

Mr. Thaninayagam Selvanayagam, a Srilankan Tamil has commenced test television transmissions in the Tamil language from the above address in Germany from 14.4.94 (Tamil New Year's Day). He states in a press release that the purpose of the transmission is not merely entertainment but something more important and fundamental. Most of the Tamils of Sri Lanka are living outside their motherland surrounded by various other cultures and languages and this he states would lead to the younger generation to overlook or even forget the Tamil language and culture. This danger has cropped up in several countries where they are resident at present and the only modern and impressive media is the television, where audio and visual transmissions are presented at the same time. It is proposed to provide as much children's programmes as possible so that they are continually fed with their language and culture. The first step is to cover Europe which is being done now. The next step is to extend to Asia and USA before the end of April '94.

The service is being provided on an 8 hour programme, repeated twice a day to complete 24 hours. This would help to cover all countries of the world where Tamils live.

The transmission will be by satellite the details of which appear below.

(a) Satelite: EUTELSAT II F3 in 16 degrees East.

(b) Video Frequency: Vertical – 11.575 GHz.

(c) Audio Frequency: 6.60 MHz.

A satellite dish and a decoder are required to operate normal TV sets to receive the transmissions and are available at £179 and £160 respectively from the authorised UK representative, Mr. S. Ratnarajah, 7 Elmers Close, Enfield, Middx., EN2 7EE. Tel:/Fax: 081 364 4566.

An annual licence fee of £230 inclusive of V.A.T. also becomes payable.

Kavitha & Meera

Bharatha Natyam Arangetram

Kavitha and Meera *the daughters of* **Vasundra and Dr. Canagaratnam Pathmarajah,** *performed their South Indian Classical Dance debut or 'Arangetram' on July 31st, 1993. They evinced great talent and artistic excellence during their presentation at the Performance Arts Center in Lancaster, California, USA. It was a great milestone in their careers.*

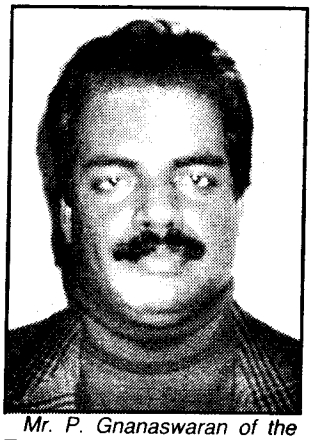
The event was also a momentous one for the dancers' Guru, their first cousin, Mrs. Jayagowri Arulmoli nee Nakulendran. This debut was the first 'Arangetram' she choreographed and conducted. She imparted to Kavitha and Meera the Madras Kalakshetra style of Bharatha Natyam. Jayagowri had trained in this style over a period of fifteen years, first under the late, devout, Guru Erambu Subbiah of the Kalabavanam Institute of Kokuvil, Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and later at the 'Bharatha Choodamani' Fine Arts Institute at Adyar, Madras, South India. the Arangetram was graced with the participation and support of Jayagowri's Guru 'Padmashri' Adyar K. Lashman, director of the 'Bharatha Choodamani' Fine Arts Academy.

Kavitha and Meera's debut had the full support of their family. Jayagowri's sister, Sankari Senthilkumar, provided vocal support. Sankari, who is a 'sangeetha vidwan' and a gold medallist of Madras, is reputed for melodious rendering. Branavan Umakanthan, also a first cousin of the dancers played the veena. Yet another cousin, the young Ahila Ghulasekaram, an accomplished dancer herself, played the 'Thambura' throughout the program. Mention has to be made of two more accompanists of the orchestra, who are both stalwarts of repute. One, A.V. Unnikrishnan, a senior flutist who exhibits remarkable talent and the other K. Gopinath, younger sibling of Adyar K. Lakshman, on the mridangam. Both Unnikrishnan and Gopinath hail from Madras and added prestige to the arangetram.

Kavitha and Meera have performed extensively in California. They have taken part in the annual 'Kaleidoscope' program of the California State University at Long Beach for three years. Their most recent perfomance on February 26th, 1994, was at the University of Berkeley in Northern California, where they danced to help in the collection of funds for the establishment of a Tamil Chair. The girls were born and raised in Lancaster, which is located in the Antelope Valley of Southern California. They are the granddaughters of Mr. C. Canagaratnam, who presently resides in California, USA, and the late Kamala Canagaratnam of Kandarmadam, Jaffna. Their maternal grandparents are the late Chelvadurai Duke Wijyadevendram and Rohini Wijyadevendram who resides in Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

New International Video Magazine

A Srilankan entrepreneur trained in T.V. production in U.K. and resident in Canada is due to launch an innovative Video Magazine linking Tamil Artistes of several countries. Titled 'Themathuram', it will be the first video magazine which will be produced from various TV presentations from Sri Lanka, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Mauritius and Canada.



Mr. P. Gnanaswaran of the Tamil Cultural Network has conceived this novel idea and expects to release the first video immediately after the Hindu New Year on 14th April 1994.

Thirumalai Pathirakali'

Students of the Nupura Kendra School of Dance presented 'Thirumalai Pathirakali' a programme of Bharata Natyam with the proceeds dedicated to the Hindu Shrine of Pathirakali in Trincomalee in Eastern Sri Lanka. The show included items of Pathirakali, her chariot Festival, four items showing the many roles of Krishna, Boomalatam – a dance by dolls and two dance dramas during the latter half, one titled 'Brindhavani' and the other 'Nadanamiddum Silambu'.

All items and Ballets were choreographed and presented by Srimathy Subathra Sivadasan, Director and the Guru of

the Nupura Kendra School of Dancing. Srimathy Subathra had her early training under the great Balasundari and later had further training at Adayer under Adayer Laxmanan. After taking the Shri Lankan Bharata Natya world by storm in the early '80s by her superb productions on stage and on television she started her Dancing School in the UK, and presented two programmes, Atthi Parasakthi in 1991 and Vishnu Arpanam in 1992 in aid of Hindu Temples in Shri Lanka.

After dedication prayer to Ganesh, the programme commenced with a Dance in praise of Goddess Kaali followed by Therottam depicting the Chariot Festival at the Pathirakali Temple. This Temple in Trincomalee has a record of miraculous powers. History records that when Trincomalee was bombed by Japanese fighter planes during World War II the bombs were deflected into the sea by the divine power of the Goddess thus saving the town, the inhabitants and the Temple from destruction. It was heartening to see eight tiny tots not more than eight years old pulling a replica of the great chariot on the Croydon Fairfield Hall stage.

The next four items portrayed God Krishna as playmate, servant, lover and Sathguru (Spiritual Master) respectively. I liked the last item when aptly named Krishani as Krishna and Janani as Arjune in the immortal scene of Geetha Upathesam where God himself came down to earth as a charioteer to Arjuna to show him the true path to god.

The Laya Vadya Natyam, a Dance performed to rhythm alone was enjoyable and so was Bommalatam – a Dance by Dolls which come to life one night. There were statues of Siva, Ganesh, Murugan, Laxmi, Saraswathi, Meera, Rada Krishna and Durga. But the Dance that impressed most was that of Mavali who portrayed a Tanjore dancing doll which most of us have in our homes.

The first of the Dance Dramas was Brindhavani – the story of Thulasi – an ardent devotee married to a Demon King who insults God and Godmen. Vishnu himself comes down to earth and by trickery kills the Demon King. Brindhavani is hurt and she curses God Vishnu to lose his complexion. She also asks a boon that as an ardent devotee she always remains near him. The Dance explains as to why a Thulasi tree is always found near every Vishnu Temple.

Anita as Brindhavani and Saashini as the Demon King and Devika as God Vishnu were very impressive. Congratulations to all the Devas, Asuras, Maids and others. The war scene between the Devas and Asuras was performed with precision and beauty.

The second Ballet was staged after the interval. Titled Nadanamiddum Silambu, a Dance Drama based on the greatest Tamil epic Silapadikaram. The epic was written in the second century A.D. By Elanko, a Prince who abdicated his throne to become a Saint. The story describes how Kovalan left his pretty and virtuous wife Kannahi to seek a danseuse, meets a dishonest goldsmith and is framed with the crime of stealing the Queen's anklets. The King fails to hold an enquiry and orders Kovalan to be executed. Angry Kannahi confronts the King and proves that the King had wrongly sent her husband to the executioner. The King dies of shock and the Queen follows suit. Kannahi not being satisfied seeks further revenge and invokes the Fire God to destroy the entire city, but excluding the young children, cows, charitable persons and priests.

The entire cast of 4 students had handled the story very well and appeared to understand the epic very well before they could portray a mixture of varied emotions. Thulasi as Kannahi, Nirthica as Kovalan, Lakshmi as Mathavi, and Jenarthani as the Fire God rendered exemplary performances.

At the time of the curtain call the entire cast comprising 73 students assembled on stage and took a bow to the thunderous applause of the audience. The Guru and the traditionalists amongst the parents did not forget to perform an Aarthi on all the 73 students to ward off the evil eye on these extremely talented youngsters and to their School which earned another feather in its cap with this performance.

– Wimal Sockanathan.

Private Tuition
Pure/Applied Mathematics. Statistics, Physics O/A Level, Homes visited.
Tel: 081-864 3227

Prakash Yadagudde's Solo

Bharatanatyam is generally believed to be the domain of women and when men indulge in it the exercise is usually related to Natakam or drama, like Bhagavata Mela. In recent years Dananjayan and the late Venkatachalapathi among a small band of men have been dancing solo. It was a pleasant experience to watch a solo performance here in London on 26th March by the teacher/choreographer Prakash Yadagodde 'tripping the fantastic toe' with gay abandon.

After the usual invocatory to Lord Ganesha, Prakash stepped into the main featurised item 'Navarasa Nayaki', an attractive lyric composed by the well known Yalpanam Viramani Iyer. Illustrating the nine rasas or sentiments of the classical mode, the lyricist has woven into the composition puranic episodes to fit into the different rasas. Siva and Parvati are the main characters and Parvati's reactions are portrayed to represent the rasas. for instance, Siva's appearance with dreadful skulls and ash smeared body evokes Disgust (Bibhatsa), His swallowing the poison from the churning of the milky ocean evokes Wonder (Adbhuta), Ganapathi winning the race over his brother by walking thrice round his parents evokes Humour (Haysa) etc. In all the nine illustrations Prakash revealed his expert handling of appropriate korvais and abhinayas. It was tactical on his part to have passed on the Sabdam piece (on the frolics of Gopis around Krishna) to be danced by Meera Appa. Sivasakthi Sivanesan while singing the lyrics expertly handled the cymbals while Bhavani Shankar on the mridangam and Chandrasekar on the violin supported admirably.

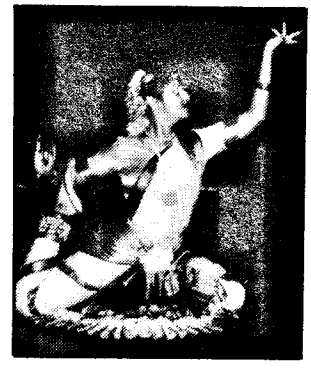
One would like to point out that there was no justification to have chosen the piece KA VA VA In which Prakash used the same 'mango episode' once again, having already portrayed it in the Navarasa sequence. On the whole, Prakash's solo natyam was smooth, appropriate and totally entertaining.

– Sivapatha Sundaram.

World Saiva Council

The Third Annual Conference of the World Saiva Council will be held in Paris on 25th and 26th June 1994. Attendance at the Conference is open to all members of the World Saiva Council and Regional Committees. Those wishing to attend, please contact the Secretary General, W.S.C., 72 King Edward Road, London E17 6HZ. Tel: 081 531 6435.

Brintha Baladasan's Arangetram



After a lull the Logan Hall reverbrated with the jingling of bells and cymbals – the Arangetram performance of Brintha Baladasan on 19th March. From the reaction of the audience at the end of the show one could read the sense of satisfaction and appreciation of the whole programme. While placing her first step on the stage one could sense the inevitable trepidation but the artiste in her continued with ease and confidence.

The programme was well structured with the usual repertoire and the Sankarabharanam Varnam was heavy with strings of Tirmanams. All the same Brintha showed that she could go through the exercise unscathed. The sancharibhava illustrations of Mahabharata episodes, the game of dice, and Draupati Vastrapaharanam

Continued on page 34

Continued from page 33

were attractively produced, particularly the disrobing scene was touchingly illustrated.

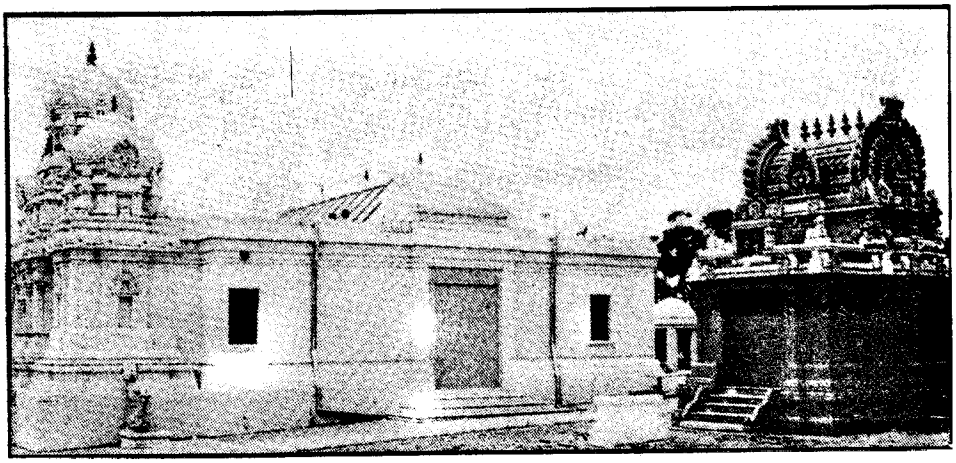
In the Padam 'Vattu Nagar Vavi' of Yalpanam Viramani Iyer the legendary 'singing fish' is used as a messenger by the consort of Kataragama Muruga to convey her message of love. Brintha mimed pleasantly.

One could find an appreciative team work – the Guru and the whole orchestra of the same institution supporting the dancer. Prakash Yadagudde's nattuvangam, Sivasakthi Sivanesan's singing, Bhavani Shankar's mridangam and Chandrasekar's violin proved a wonderful combination.

A note about the well tried out, and still appreciated Natanam Adinar padam by Gopalakrishna Bharatiyar. While miming for the words 'Gopalakrishnan Paada' Brintha showed the Upaveedha or sacred thread of the Brahmins. This practice is followed by many in India too. Certain others show Krishna playing the flute. Gopalakrishna Bharatiyar has simply signed his signature and, therefore, the correct abhinayam is to show the author, the scribe.

S.S.

Magnificent Shiva Venkateshwara Temple in Australia



The small but beautiful town of Helensburg, 65 kilometres south of Sydney, was transformed when it received 4000 devotees of Lord Shiva from several parts of the world for the **Maha Kumbabishekam** *of the newly constructed Shiva Venkateshwara Temple on 23rd January 1994. To the Aussies, it seemed like a carnival, but the devotees had come to see a dream come true.*

The Shiva Venkateshwara Temple Association was inaugurated on 17th September 1978. An year later the association took formal possession of the site in Helensburg. The Wollongong City Council approved the construction in the '80s and bands of highly skilled artisans arrived from South India to build the temple in the Dravidian style of architecture of the seventh century AD.

The high priests of the temple Dr. S. Kurukkal and his assistants who were accommodated in four caravans hired for the priests to live near the temple, worked very hard performing poojahs and slept only two or three hours a day. The ladies had one of the most difficult tasks, making garlands to adorn the various deities consecrated.

The main aim of building the temple, which houses the idols of Ganesha, Shiva, Parvathi, Durgha, Venkateshwara, Mahalakshmi, Murugan, Hanuman and Rama was to bring the various Hindu communities living in Australia together for worship.

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